

Leaders FORUM

summer, 2008

The Best is Yet to Come!

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

Springtime and the closing of another school year can be an emotional time for people, even for us seemingly stern and stodgy school district administrators! Graduations, retirements, departures of colleagues to greener pastures, and transitions of every sort can tug at our heartstrings.

My own tear ducts were especially tested in April by the wedding ceremony of my only daughter to a fine Irish lad from south side Chicago. Furthermore, departing from my Minnesota school district this July to begin in my new River Falls, Wisconsin district, adds to my unsettled feelings of nostalgia and anxiety.

All of this emotion led me back to the fork story I heard somewhere along the way.

It seems that Martha was told that she had only 6 months to live. Hearing the news, she decided to sit down with her pastor to discuss her passing.

Martha looked at Jim with a twinkle in her eye and said, "Pastor, when they bury me, I want my old Bible in one hand a fork in the other."

"A fork?" Pastor Jim responded in surprise. "Why do you want to be buried with a fork?"

"Well, I have been thinking about all of the church dinners and banquets I attended through the years," she explained. "I can't count them all. But at those really nice get-togethers, when the meal was almost finished, a server would come by to collect the dirty dishes. Sometimes, at the best ones, somebody would lean over my shoulder and whisper, 'You can keep your fork.' That meant that dessert was coming!"

"And it didn't mean a cup of Jell-O or pudding or even a dish of ice cream. You don't need a fork for that. It meant the good stuff, like chocolate cake or cherry pie! When they told me to keep my fork, I knew the best was yet to come!"

"That's exactly what I want people to talk about at my

funeral. When they walk by my casket and look at my pretty green outfit, I want them to turn to one another and say, 'Why the fork?'"

"And here's what I want you say, Pastor. You tell them that I kept my fork because the best is yet to come!"

That story, while referring, of course, to heaven, has helped me through many a dark day in the past. No matter what, "The Best is Yet to Come!" Are you discouraged about the financial woes of your school district and lack of sympathetic legislators or local taxpayers? Are you making a move into a new job, either forced or sought, and feeling internal strife about the change? Struggling with board members, stalled negotiations, or budget reduction pains? Dreading the results of this year's testing and the upcoming AYP results? The Best is Yet to Come.

Pollyanna Westerhaus, you're calling me? Tommy Sunshine? Perhaps. But like it or not, we district leaders must live with optimistic spirits, honing our visionary skills and inspiring others to follow our hope-filled dreams and promises of better days to come.

It has been truly an honor to serve as your MASA president this past year. It has been an active year, filled with many accomplishments by our organization (see list of **The Best is Yet to Come! ... Continued on Page 3**)



Tom Westerhaus

inside ...

Minnesota's Promise	2
Reflections on MASA's Trip to Washington, DC ..	4
The Story of the Future	6
Avoiding Pitfalls on Major Construction.....	8
A Look Forward to 2009.....	10
Using the Applicant Site	14
Staying Fit Physically & Emotionally	16
Thank You Spring Conference Sponsors	18

Minnesota's Promise: World Class Schools, World Class State



Charlie Kyte

by **Charlie Kyte,**
MASA Executive Director

The report issued last fall entitled “Minnesota’s Promise: World Class Schools, World Class State” was a very important venture of our association and many other associations in trying to define a high quality future for K-12 education in the state of Minnesota. The ten goals identified within Minnesota’s Promise are the key ingredients that will allow the students of

Minnesota to obtain rigorous and advanced educations.

The work of the Minnesota’s Promise report has only just begun. Many organizations are on board and the conversation about high quality schools is reverberating amongst educators. The next step is to engage businesses and communities in the conversation. Together, we need to engage all Minnesotans in helping to design and provide a world-class education for our children. The economy of our state and the wellbeing of us as adults are very dependent upon having our youth well educated.

We will continue to share and promote the ten major goals of the Minnesota’s Promise report. We are hopeful that this is work to be done not only by educators, but also by our policy leaders in the state and by our business communities.

The ten strategies of Minnesota’s Promise:

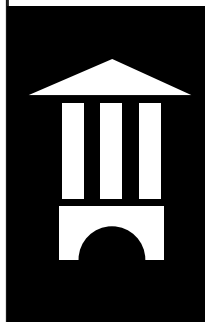
1. Early Childhood Education: Investment in educational success starts early.
2. Educator Quality: Great teachers and principals are recruited, prepared, supported, and retained.
3. Academic Rigor: All academic roads are rigorous, and all lead to higher education.
4. Family and Community Involvement: Families and communities are full partners in education.
5. Multicultural Community: All cultures are included and supported, and connections are made across local and global cultural divides.
6. Data and Research: Educators use data and research to improve teaching and learning every day.
7. Funding: Schools are provided with funding that is predictable and sufficient to produce world-class performance.
8. Time: Schedules and calendars are designed to help all students reach high standards.
9. Special Education: Services for students with disabilities are proactive, effective, efficient, and adequately funded.
10. Health and Wellness: Parents and other stakeholders ensure that students come to school physically and mentally ready to learn. •

Are You Moving?

Now is the time of year when many of our members are on the move! Help us keep track of you (and therefore keep your MASA benefits and services coming to you!).

Just give Jeanna a call (651/645-6272 or 866/444-5251), fax her a note (651/645-7518), or email her at members@mnasa.org and she will update your records. Also, if you have new colleagues in your area who are not MASA members, let us know and we will send membership information to them. •

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**Be sure to mark your calendars for the
2008 CLM Fall Conference,
November 19-21, 2008 -
Cragun's Resort, Brainerd.**

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Mary Law, Associate for Leadership Support
 MASA, 1884 Como Avenue
 St. Paul, Minnesota 55108
 (651) 645-6272 • (866) 444-5251 • FAX (651) 645-7518

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



The Best is Yet to Come! ... Continued from Page 1

accomplishments below). It is with sincere sadness that I move from Minnesota, for I leave behind some of the most outstanding educational leaders I could ever hope to have as colleagues and friends. Perhaps as past president next year, I will occasionally sneak across the border to check up on you or tap your wealth of knowledge for my newly adopted district and state.

And speaking of “The Best is Yet to Come,” I leave the MASA organization in the very capable hands of President Dan Brooks, President-Elect Gary Amoroso, Treasurer Chris Richardson, an outstanding Board of Directors, our champion and ever-ready cheerleader Executive Director Charlie Kyte, and all of the fabulous staff in the MASA offices. With this band of optimistic souls, the possibilities are endless and the promise of making Minnesota truly “World Class Schools; World Class State” is within your reach. Thank you for the good work you have done and will continue to do. **The Best is Yet to Come.** •

MASA 2007-08 Goal Accomplishments

Goal 1: Project Unity Among Our Members

- Enhanced efforts to deliver programs on regional basis
- Developed regional mentoring resources
- Director attended regional membership meetings
- Engaged retired members as mentors
- Worked to minimize metro/out state conflicts

Goal 2: Continue Leadership for Educational Excellence

- Promoted Minnesota's Promise with members for local use and with legislators or possible legislation
- Promoted early intervention strategies (RtI) to reduce reliance on special education
- Provided variety of communication skills training to enhance members' ability to be local voice
- Engaged in broader effort to communicate more fully with media in greater MN
- Promoted “Safe Pathways to Schools” project
- Collaborated to build support for anti-obesity & healthy nutrition efforts
- Worked with rural school districts to identify real data for measuring student achievement and engage in strategic planning
- MN Rural Educational Leaders Program supported rural districts

Goal 3: Improve Member Involvement/Services

- Expanded legislative committee to include sub-committees on Finance, Policy, Contracts/Pensions, and legislative contacts
- Regional members visited capitol on regular basis
- Created regional communities of learners
- Created a business partnership to provide funding for each region in 2008-09 and beyond to develop professional development plans and mentoring for new leaders
- Increased member participation in MASA Foundation
- Developed Polaris Award to recognize experienced administrators & the MASA Outstanding Central Office Leader Award
- Explored resources for anti-blogging effort
- Enhanced member recognition
- Provided significant conference for curriculum leaders
- Extended efforts to engage new and mid-career members in professional development cohorts

Goal 4: Increase Collaboration with Other Groups

- Collaborated with principals to promote “Say Yes to No” campaign
- RtI Summit delivered through multi-state collaboration
- Promoted relationship-building and communications with MDE
- Worked with new Ed Minnesota leadership to seek common voice
- Furthered MASA/MASE/MinnSPRA organizational relationships
- Expanded underwriting of professional development initiatives and recognitions by businesses
- Blandin supported MREL for rural leaders

MASA Federal Legislative Report: Reflections on MASA's Trip to Washington, D.C.

by **Craig Oftedahl**
Superintendent, Warroad Schools

and

Jamie Skjeveland
Superintendent, Crosby-Ironton Schools

On April 15th -18th, six members of MASA's Federal Legislative Committee traveled to Washington D.C. with the important task of educating legislators about the flaws and punitive nature of NCLB. Our Minnesota delegation worked hard to communicate specifically targeted areas. Special education was earmarked because of the cell size irregularities, creating hardship for many districts being cited for AYP. Another area of concern was the lack of Title I funding and the subsequent burden on school districts.

Our group also pushed for a moratorium on the Medicaid reimbursement amendment that is currently slated to be phased out for transportation and administrative costs this June. Funding was discussed, as schools attempt to respond to the mandates that continue to be added at the state and federal levels of government.

Upon arrival in D.C., we divided in two different groups, in an effort to increase the number of congressional staffers who would hear our message. Our message was simple; solve the NCLB issues with a simpler solution, rather than to make the law more convoluted. Many would argue for a complete overhaul. The response heard most often was 2010 at the soonest. In other words, NCLB will probably not change much for a couple of years.

Unfortunately, the reality of the visits with the staff, who were quite young, was less than productive. According to Warroad Superintendent, Craig Oftedahl, "Listening to a legislative assistant for Buck McKeon (R-Calif.), it became very apparent the political process is definitely not nearly as effective as most of us would like." Oftedahl was told that when members of congress consider various ideas for bills, cycling through the political process is good. In the end, the law is really nothing like the original idea and that is okay. After hearing this, Oftedahl was disappointed with the grim realities that the political process often produces. Thus, our cry for simplification, which seemed to fall on deaf ears, was relayed and spoken but rarely heard.

Another member of the cohort, Jamie Skjeveland (Crosby-Ironton), reflected that the lessons learned in D.C. include

the same principles that apply when tackling issues with Minnesota state legislators. That is, establishing cohesive relationships with legislative staff members is critical. Communicating with politicians is far more effective when they are in their home districts, rather than visiting them while they are in session. Lastly, be prepared to offer solutions to issues rather than issuing your complaint and running to the nearest exit to do the same thing to the next politician. More often than not, politicians are aware of the problem. They are interested in what constituents bring to the table in terms of possible solutions.

The Federal Advocacy Committee learned a great deal about relationship building and the importance of reaching people and communicating the needs of a group. It will continue to be an important component of MASA, as we strive to improve education in our state and nation. •



Midwest Leadership Summit II: Putting the "I" in RtI

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The Story of the Future



Shari Prest

by Shari Prest,
Ark Associates

Who: Each and every one of us and the politicians who represent us.

What: Funding and support for the public schools that are preparing the next generation of our workforce, leadership, and parents.

When: Every day, as we examine issues, make our voices heard

and our will known; also, as we participate in local, state, and national elections to shape the future through casting informed votes.

Where: In our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, community organizations, schools, school districts, and polling places—wherever we have the opportunity to listen, learn, and share our perspectives.

Why: Because we are responsible for the possibilities of the future: for setting priorities and providing adequate and

equitable educational opportunities for our children—not only as a constitutional ideal, but also as a practical investment.

How:

- Communicate regularly with our elected officials and let them know we want our state resources invested in the future of our state through sustained and adequate funding of public education.
- Encourage legislators to use a collaborative process to overhaul school funding formulas and revenue mechanisms that fund schools.
- Discourage funding mechanisms that reflect partisan politics rather than thoughtful policy.
- Cast informed and responsible votes in November. •

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Avoiding Pitfalls on Major Construction Projects: A Few Simple Steps



Peter G. Mikhail

by Peter G. Mikhail, Shareholder and James M. Strommen, Shareholder Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

New schools and other major building facilities are significant commitments. They symbolize the promise and responsibility to provide first-rate educational experiences for young people in the district for generations to come.

However, the nuts and bolts of the construction process is complicated, and things can go wrong. This article points out just a few of the important and potentially costly aspects of that process that can be easily overlooked.

1. The Contract Documents

The architect can and does assist in the preparation of the contract documents. The architect alone

should not, however, prepare the General Conditions of the contract. The General Conditions are the terms in the contract that govern the legal relationships between multiple participants including the architect, general contractor, construction manager, and the Owner.

More to the point, the architect is an integral participant in the project, and that creates a very real conflict of interest. Some form General Conditions published by industry groups contain provisions that often impede the Owner from asserting its rights. For example, for certain claims, Minnesota law gives the Owner two years to start a lawsuit after discovering the defect in the building. Some industry standard contract forms, however, limit the time to bring claims to two years after substantial completion of the construction. In other words, the time to bring a claim can expire before you discover that you have a claim. That is not a good contract for any Owner.

In another example, some industry forms include a “non-joinder” clause in the case of a dispute. This clause requires the owner to sue the architect and contractors in separate proceedings. Construction defect lawsuits may involve construction defects, design defects, or both. In many cases, the designers and builders both are necessary parties. These cases are best resolved in one proceeding, not two or more. With a non-joinder clause, however, the Owner is forced to

duplicate its time and expense by litigating the same issues in separate proceedings.

Other examples may appear in contracts drafted by designers who do not use industry standard forms. These “house” contracts may protect the designer, at the Owner’s expense, in any number of ways. For example, some contracts limit the designer’s liability to the amount of the designer’s fees. It is not in the Owner’s interest to limit the designer’s liability to its fees when the costs resulting from faulty design on a \$7 million building can be much, much greater. Other contracts may provide that the designer will be paid to inspect the construction as it progresses, but disavow any responsibility for the consequences of poor inspection practices. It is fair, and important, for the Owner to understand that the designer performing inspections does not guarantee the contractor’s work – the contractor is responsible for that. However, to the extent the designer is paid to inspect, the designer should be held accountable for performing appropriate inspections and reporting observed deficiencies to the Owner.

2. Retaining Owner’s Representation

By their very nature, large construction projects are complex, lengthy, and consequently, can give rise to disputes. On larger projects, it may be worthwhile to retain an independent construction manager or Owners Representative to protect the Owner’s interest. Someone who is not responsible for the design and not acting as general contractor is more capable of giving objective advice. There is additional cost to hire a construction manager, but it can be well worth it on a large building project.

3. Monitoring Warranties

Warranties in construction can be easy to forget. A 15-year warranty on a new roof is not uncommon. If you discover a defect because it starts leaking in year one, however, you do not have 14 more years to make a claim. The notice of claim requirements contained in the warranty may give you months, not years, to notify the contractor. If the roofing company fails to correct the problem under Minnesota law, you must bring the breach of warranty claim within two years of that failure. Regardless of how many years are left on the warranty, defects require immediate action when they are discovered. Large buildings often have several separate and direct warranties between the district and trades or suppliers other than the general contractor. It is critical to monitor these timelines.

Avoiding Pitfalls ... Continued on Page 21

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Andy Pratt, apratt@kennedy-graven.com

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Reflections On the 2008 Legislative Session and A Look Forward to 2009



Charles Kyte

by **Charles Kyte**
Executive Director, MASA

The 2008 Legislative session, from the perspective of K-12 education, resulted in a positive outcome. We must consider this from the standpoint of the state of Minnesota going through a significant budget downsizing. In this second year of the biennium, between reductions in fund balances and cutbacks, nearly

one billion dollars was trimmed. There was little interest on the part of the elected leaders of that state in changing the revenue stream of income coming into the state. Thus, cutbacks had to be made.

In the end, education received some additional funding, no policy changes, and there were a few modifications to the pension system. Finally, a statewide educators health insurance program was not enacted.

In funding, schools received one time help to the tune of one percent (\$51/pu) for the general fund and the ability to transfer an additional \$51 from the Capitol Outlay Reserve Account into the general fund. There also will be some new money coming from the School Trust Lands beginning in 2009-10, that will amount in the beginning to about \$30/pu a year.

Part of the money for the one time increases comes from the excess funding in the Q-Comp Program. However, about half of the funding for Q-Comp remains and districts interested in using this avenue to increase professional development and student achievement in their districts may submit applications.

In the end, there was no educational funding policy passed. The governor vetoed the original bill which had some controversial sections. Ultimately, the legislature did not send another education policy bill through the legislative process. Although this may have left us with a few things that we did not gain, it also relieves schools from a number of mandates that we wouldn't have cared to have to implement. The Pension Commission, led ably by Representative Mary Murphy, did produce a bill that ultimately provided some improvements in the pension system. Most notable was a mechanism to merge the post-retirement fund with the active fund in the case that the post-fund became significantly underfunded. This may or may not happen, and will be

dependent on the success or failure of the stock market as time goes on.

There was also an increase in the amount of money that school districts could match for 403(b) tax-deferred accounts. The amount of money that retirees could earn after retirement was increased significantly up to \$42,000 a year. There was also a provision allowing persons who are planning to retire to negotiate an ongoing relationship with their school district in the case that they want to teach or administrate part-time. There were some other gains as well. The Minnesota School Board Association took the lead in slightly changing the process by which referendum elections are held. In the case that there is no additional tax increase proposed, the language proclaiming a tax increase could be removed from the election ballots.

The MASA lobbyist, Valerie Dosland, worked hard to help modify some of the rules regarding employee background checks. This relates to persons who are just coming into the employee of school districts. With the changes in the law, a school district can now hire a third party security firm for the purpose of not only doing full back ground checks, but also doing the BCA check of the perspective employee. Further, she helped to clean up language regarding the background checks for coaches. Essentially, that language says that anyone who is coaching, paid or volunteer, and working in an independent situation with students, must have a BCA background check.

Finally, school districts received some additional levy authority. School districts have a higher level of lease level authority than they have in the past (moving from \$100/pu-\$150/pu). Some schools districts were going to have to pay back money to the counties because of a federal audit regarding local time share collaboratives. Those school districts will be able to raise these funds over a three-year period in a judgment type of levy. Some schools districts with post-retirement obligations for health insurance may be able to sell bonds and then pay those bonds back through a levy process. This is a relatively complex process and will bear careful study before school districts enter into it.

At the very last moments of the legislative session, Education Minnesota was able to move another version of the Statewide Teachers Health Insurance Bill through the Senate and the House. It was passed and sent to the governor. Shortly after the end of the session the governor vetoed this legislation.

As we look forward to 2009, and a new biennium, there will
Reflections ... Continued on Page 17

Management Concerned for Public Education

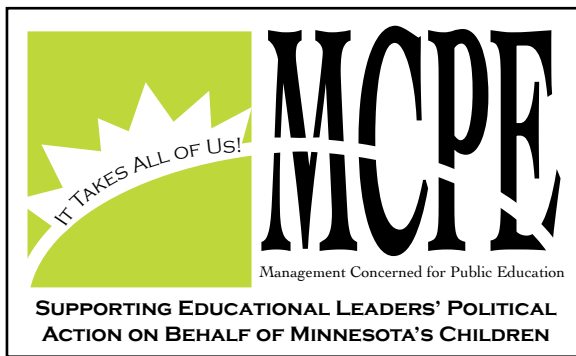
by Charles Kyte
Executive Director, MASA

The political action arm of MASA is Management Concerned for Public Education "MCPE". Members contribute a modest amount of money each year, and in turn, we use these funds as political contributions both to the party Caucuses of the Minnesota House and Senate and, on occasion, to individual candidates who are especially supportive of education issues.

Minnesota law greatly restricts the amount of money that lobbyists can provide for meals for legislators. Thus, the only place that legislators gather on social occasions is at Caucus fundraisers. It's important for the leadership

of MASA to be involved, and in attendance, at these fundraisers. This is where many of the connections and relationships are built that ultimately helps to shape the direction of K-12 education policy during the legislative session.

This year, because all the members of the House of Representatives are up for election, there will be an increased demand for attendance at political functions. It would really be helpful if more of the MASA members and retirees make a contribution of \$50 or \$25 to MCPE to help support this effort. If you have not yet made a contribution, please clip out the form below, attach a check, and send it in. Your individual contribution becomes very helpful in supporting the political action efforts of our association. •



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to influence sound policymaking on behalf of public education.

It Takes All of Us

to strengthen our collegial voice in the public domain.

It Takes All of Us

to inform and advise legislators and the public at large about issues important to students and their families.

It Takes All of Us

to reinforce the role of school administrators as community leaders and educational experts.

It Takes All of Us

to realize the vision of public support for the success of each student we pledge to educate.

Join MASA's political effort today

and become an active participant in the political process bringing positive change to Minnesota public education.

Management Concerned for Public Education

Membership Application: January 1 - December 31, 2008

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Yes, I'd like to join MCPE and have enclosed the \$50.00 membership fee.

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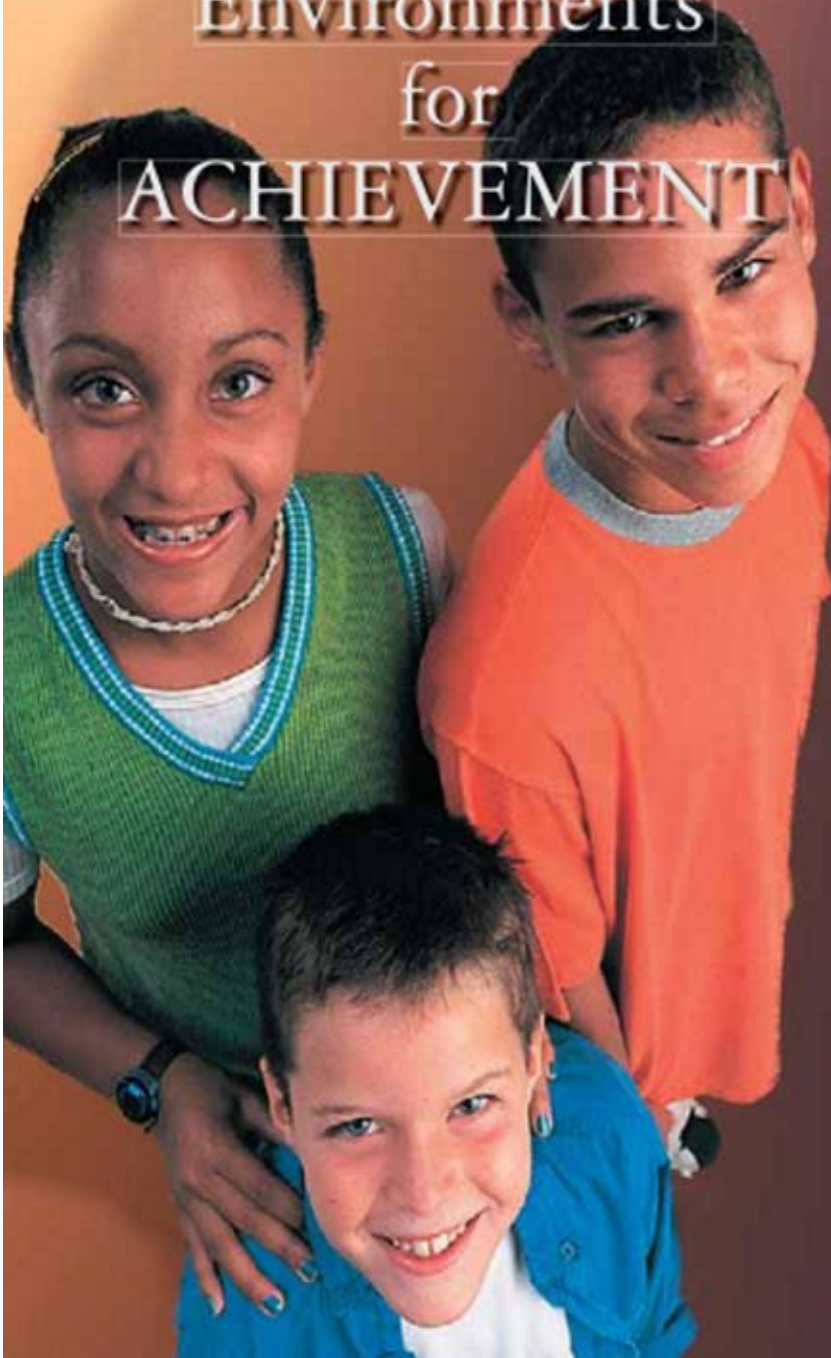
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BUILDING YOUR *team*

Use the MASA Applicant Site to Find Substitute Teachers!

by Fred Kunze
Manager, MASA Applicant Site

Do you find yourself looking for teachers willing to substitute during the school year? Did you know that your subscription to the Jobsite/Applicant site provides an excellent tool for doing just that?

When you pay for your Jobsite subscription, you are automatically subscribed to the Applicant site. The Jobsite is where you post your job openings. The Applicant site is where teacher applicants post their professional profiles. It is easy to search the Applicant site for candidates for any position, including short or long term substitutes.

Right now you are only a few quick steps away from viewing a list of applicants who will sub for your district. Here are the steps:

1. Go to this web address:
<http://www.appsitemnasa.org/appmain.htm>
2. Click on "District Login."
3. At the next screen, log in using the username and password provided by the MASA office which gives you access to the Applicant site.
4. Click in the box to the left of the "Willing to Substitute (Short Call)" field.
5. Scroll to the bottom and click on "Search."
6. A list of candidates willing to substitute will appear. Click on any name to view their full profile. The profile has 13 categories of information. You can search the entire

database using any category criterion, or multiple criteria.

Note: On the day I did this search I got a list of 8 pages of candidates willing to substitute for K-12. If you want to get the list down to only elementary, then click in "elementary Setting" in the "Work Level Setting" field (do not reset).

On the day I did this I got five pages of hits of candidates. When I removed the work level check and selected "Elementary" for a license, I saw two pages of hits for elementary licensed teachers who said they were willing to substitute.

Any district may receive free additional information (or training) about using the Applicant Site by calling the MASA office or contacting Fred Kunze 763-792-6690 or fredk92188@aol.com.

The Applicant Site is easy to use and you already have full access with your Jobsite Subscription! •

Have you renewed your membership?

Membership materials have been mailed. For more information or additional membership materials, contact the MASA office at (651/645-6272 / 866-444-5251 or members@mnasa.org) or visit our web site at (www.mnasa.org).

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- Post jobs
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The Jobsite's applicant site streamlines the hiring process for both school districts and applicants. Applicants for licensed positions complete an online screening form that member districts can use to electronically screen applicants according to their own criteria.

Applicants may post their credentials (transcripts, license, letters of recommendation, etc.) to the site.

For most school districts, the annual subscription cost is less than the cost of advertising just one position in the newspaper. And the jobsite postings and applications are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Rates are determined according to district size.

Visit us on the "net:"
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Jobsite Online is a service of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators
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ELECTION *news*

The Results are In—Congratulations to Elected Leaders!



Gary Amoroso

Congratulations to the following candidates who have been elected to MASA leadership positions. Newly elected leaders participated in a planning session with the full MASA Board of Directors this month. MASA appreciates these leaders for their commitment to MASA and Minnesota education and offers them thanks and best wishes as they begin their terms of service.

President-Elect: Gary Amoroso, Lakeville

Treasurer: Chris Richardson, Northfield

Board Members:

Region 5—Curt Tryggestad, Little Falls

Region 9—Jon McBroom, Shakopee

Metro Central Office – Jane Sigford, Wayzata

Metro Special Education – Kim Marie Riesgraf, Osseo

Service Provider – Jerry Robicheau, MSU

Minnesota Representatives to the AASA Governing Board

Jack Almos, Hinkley-Finlayson

Patty Phillips, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale

Special thanks to all MASA members who participated in the election process!

2008-09 Committee Chairs and Chair-Elects:

Legislative Committee

Scott Theilman, Albany, Chair

Deb Bowers, St. Louis Park, Chair-Elect

Executive Development Committee

Scott Staska, ROCORI Chair

Jeff Olson, St. Peter, Chair-Elect

Member Services Committee

Susan Burris, Cambridge-Isanti, Chair

Deb Henton, North Branch, Chair-Elect

Nominating Committee

Connie Hayes, Intermediate 917, Chair

Keith Ryskoski, Stillwater, Chair-Elect



Federal Advocacy Committee

Jay Haugen, WSP-Mendota Heights-Eagan, Co-Chair

Ed Waltman, Mankato, Co-Chair

Mark Bezek, Elk River Area, Co-Chair-Elect

Nan Records, Sherburne-N Wright Coop, Co-Chair-Elect



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We asked our members ...

What I Do to Stay Fit Physically & Emotionally

by **David Pace**
Superintendent, East Grand Forks Schools

Personal wellness can take many different approaches. Such as a need to relieve the stresses of the day or to improve one's health. I found the need for both but that alone wasn't enough to keep me motivated. So I needed to take the approach with competition. Signing up for a bike tour and a sprint triathlon was the start; soon my competitive nature took over. The weight loss, stress reduction, along with a watchful eye on diet and continued competing in events from – iron distance triathlon to marathons and soon a full Ironman triathlon.

The incorporation of exercise in daily life is now just as important as being a school administrator. I know that without exercise I am not as effective dealing with the challenges we face every day. We don't all have to achieve an Ironman triathlon or a marathon, but we must all exercise the body as well as the mind.

by **Roger Graff**
Superintendent, Adrian Schools

When MASA asked me to provide some comments on the topic, "What I do to Stay Fit." I assumed they knew I recently turned fifty and were trying to tell me something. Whatever the case, here is what I do.

I believe that my physical health is closely linked to my social, emotional and spiritual well-being. As a result, I try to keep a good sense of humor, not take things personally, forgive when wronged and make time to preserve my relationships with family, friends and colleagues.

I also try to get some sort of daily exercise. Getting away from my office phone and computer throughout the day and walking to another part of the building to personally deliver a message or have a conversation also helps to keep me active. Beyond that, I enjoy outdoor activities that provide a variety of opportunities for exercise.

**Plan to attend the
MASA 2008 Fall Conference**

October 5 - 7

Madden's Resort, Brainerd

by **Deirdre Wells**
Superintendent
Inver Grove Heights Community Schools

While staying physically and emotionally fit can be a challenge, it should never become work. I engage in Pilates on the apparatus one or two hours per week. I have a twenty-four hour gym membership which I use periodically, but walk outdoors whenever possible. The goal is 240 minutes of exercise a week. Staying emotionally fit is simple. I laugh every day. I spend as much time as possible with my grandson. I enjoy the company of good people on the golf course, in the trout stream, on a grouse hunt, cruising on the river, at the local grub n' pub, around the kitchen table, wherever good people may gather. Finally, I work to follow my cardinal rules:

- It's not how hard you fall, it's how fast you bounce back up;
- Happiness is of your own making, don't look for someone else to do it for you;
- Keep smiling, it keeps them guessing; and
- If you work hard you get to play hard. •

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Avoiding Pitfalls ... Continued from Page 8

4. Discovery of Building “Injuries”

“Let’s figure out what caused the problem before we think about making a claim.” This is a reasonable instinct. However, in construction law in Minnesota, it is wrong and can cost the Owner the entire amount of the repair. Under current law, the clock starts to run on the two years to bring a claim when you discover the “injury,” not the defect. In other words, the claim limitation period begins to run when the problem appears—leaks, for example—not when you figure out the cause or culprit. The result of this counterintuitive legal requirement is that Owners often do not realize that they may have lost their legal right to recover from a negligent contractor or designer until it is far too late.

5. Some Solutions

These steps may help to avoid the problems listed above:

1. Send the many contract documents (the bid packet) to the district’s attorneys with sufficient time for them to review the contracts supplied by the architect or engineer (well before the packet is published for bids).
2. Consider hiring a qualified construction manager to represent the district throughout the construction process.
3. Designate a staff member to keep close tabs on the multiple warranties provided by separate subcontractors or manufacturers. The district still should deal directly with the general contractor and architect. Yet other trades or vendors give direct warranties for 3, 10, or 20 years on their work or material. Act quickly if there is a problem. Let your attorney advise you if in doubt.
4. Keep the general contractor, architect, and construction manager in the loop after completion and “chase down” any nonconformity. If any correction languishes or new problem is discovered, call your attorney about when you should act formally. •



The 2008 MASA Foundation Spelling Bee Winners: The Wanna Bees. *Congratulations!*
Pictured Left to Right: John Franzoia, Royalton; Curt Tryggstad, Little Falls; and Jamie Skjeveland, Crosby-Ironton.

Reflections ... Continued from Page 10

be some challenges. The projections of revenue and expenditures for the state indicate a fairly significant shortfall. It will require state leaders to look both at revenue and expenditures to get a balanced budget.

But there are also opportunities ahead. Some of the legislative leaders in the education area are committed to trying to find a more fair and adequate funding formula for schools. This is going to require significantly more money, but will help to relieve, over the long term, the chronic shortages that we have experienced in funding. Hopefully educators will be able to work with them, as they not only examine the funding formulas, but also the mechanisms by which we educate our children. We will have to be progressive in looking for new models and the legislature and governor will have to be progressive in finding adequate funding.

In retrospect, the 2008 legislative session turned out slightly better than we expected. School districts are receiving a little bit of breathing room financially and no new mandates. Overall, we would consider this a victory. •

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Joanne Bruns, Business Manager
Hinckley-Finlayson Public School District, MN

Calendar 2008-2009

July 4
Independence Day Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

July 31
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices

July 30 & 31
Great Start Workshop I
 The Venue @ Galtier
 St. Paul

August 4
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

August 13
Fresh Start Workshop III
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

August 14
Great Start Workshop II
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel, Bloomington

August 14-15
MSBA Summer Conference
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel, Bloomington

August 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

September 1
Labor Day Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

September 15-17
Midwest Leadership Summit II
 Rochester

October 4
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9:30 - 11:30 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 1 - 5:30 pm
 Madden's Resort, Brainerd

October 5
Board Meeting Continues
 9 - 11:30 am

October 5
MASA Foundation Golf Tournament
 12:30 pm
 Madden's Resort, Brainerd

October 5-7
MASA Fall Conference
 Madden's Resort, Brainerd

October 17
Alliance for Student Achievement Education Summit
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

October 22-24
MASE Fall Directors' Conference
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

October 29
Fresh Start Workshop IV
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

November 12
Great Start Workshop III
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

November 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

November 19-21
Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota Conference
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

November 27-28
Thanksgiving Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

December 3
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9 - 10:45 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 11 am - 4 pm
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

December 24 - 25
Winter Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

2009...
 January 1 - 2
Winter Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

January 8
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

January 14
Great Start Workshop IV
 Hyatt Regency Hotel,
 Minneapolis

January 15
2nd Year Cohort II
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

January 15-16
MSBA Winter Convention
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

February 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

February 19-22
AASA National Convention
 San Francisco, CA

March 11
Great Start Workshop V & Year 2 Cohort III
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel, Bloomington

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

March 12-13
MASA & MASE Spring Conference
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel, Bloomington

April 10
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

April 30
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

May 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

May 25
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

June (Dates to be announced)
MASA Board Retreat
 Metro Area



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