

# Leaders FORUM

Summer 2014



Jay Haugen  
MASA President and  
Superintendent  
Farmington Area Schools

The years pass quickly. It is hard to believe my year as MASA President is coming to a close. It has been my honor to serve an organization that supports its members so well, while still staying true to our first mission, serving the needs and aspirations of our students to the greatest extent. We can all take pride in being part of an organization that does more than just talk; it takes action toward its mission.



Every year MASA puts considerable effort into shaping the work of policy-makers. As school leaders, we have dedicated our lives to the pursuit of creating the most powerful education system possible, continuously evolving our systems to that purpose. As such, it is difficult to interface with a policy-making system whose decisions are often political, guided by polarization instead of collaboration. But each year, MASA jumps into the fray, eloquently advocating for a system that serves the diverse needs of students in the 21st century. We rely on more than our executive director and our lobbyist; we have created a system of communication which utilizes all members, such that policy-makers hear from us and see us *every week* of the legislative session. And while we are not always successful, our work each year plays a major role in both increasing support for our schools and also mitigating the laws and rules that take us further from our mission of educating and inspiring every student to the highest possible level.

This year also saw the beginnings of Minnevate, a new initiative from MASA. For a generation, special interest groups have been driving the vision of our educational system, leading to regulations that impair our ability to serve the unique needs of each student, keeping us from producing well-rounded graduates who are ready to take their place as our next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs. Minnevate intends to create a clear, compelling vision for the future of education. This is something that the people of Minnesota can rally behind, something that can be used to shine a light on good public policy and bad public policy. This is something that we can all use in our own communities as a spring-board for our own work. This is something that will unite us, instead of divide us. I hope that everyone takes the opportunity to be part of this state-wide conversation and invites many others to get involved in this critical, exciting work.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you this year. Here is wishing everyone a great summer, and an outstanding, renewing, rewarding school year.

Jay  
*Gone Fishing*

*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.*

## ENVISION

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## A Look Back... A Look Ahead...

*As you continue to plan for the upcoming year within your districts, I encourage you to take a page from Simon Sinek's book, and start with WHY. "What is your purpose, cause or belief? Why does your organization exist? Why do you get out of bed every morning? And why should anyone care?"*



Gary Amoroso  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of  
School Administrators

Another school year has come and gone. I hope that each of you have had a successful and rewarding year. I know that there are individual ways of defining successful, but I'd like to share a few thoughts as to why I feel that this has been a

successful year for MASA...

I must start with Minnevate! Thanks to all of you that participated in the Minnevate! process. Throughout the year, we have facilitated regional conversations where we have worked with our communities to create a common vision for our schools. Next fall we will produce a summary document of all of the events as well as an action agenda for Minnesota educational leadership.

27 of our newest leaders participated in this year's Great Start Cohort, our largest group in recent years. We expanded the program's reach by creating an Online Toolbox, monthly communications and additional sessions. The relationships established within the group live on well past the conclusion of this school year. Please spread the word that the first session of the 2014-15 Cohort will be held on August 6. Registration information is available on the MASA website.

During the legislative session, our lobbying efforts at the Capitol helped to produce additional funding for our schools for the 2014-2015 school year. We also were active in working with legislators on various policy issues such as the Safe and Supportive Schools Act. I'd like to thank all of you who took the time to call and email your

legislators and the Governor when we issued an ACTION ALERT. Your influence was felt and greatly appreciated.

Though the 2013-2014 school year has ended, at MASA we are well into planning for the 2014-2015 school year. This fall, we are excited to launch our revised Mentor/Mentee program. Thank you to those members who worked with us over the last couple of years to advance this program. As you know, support from your colleagues is essential for the success of our new superintendents. We hope to expand the program to any new MASA member in the near future.

Effective July 1, MASA will have a new component group. The Technology Leaders of Minnesota will add new skills and expertise to our association. Technology is such an integral part of what we do every day in schools. I'm excited about the opportunity for technology professionals to join our association and encourage you to suggest an MASA membership to the technology professionals within your district.

Mark your calendars for two upcoming professional development opportunities! The MDE Back to School Conference will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 5 and 6 at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest, and the MASA Fall Conference will be held at Madden's in Brainerd from Sunday evening September 28 through noon on Tuesday, September 30. These two conferences offer a great opportunity to start the new school year with your colleagues in a dynamic learning environment.

Many thanks to you for your efforts and support of our organization over the course of the year. We will continue to strive on a daily basis to support each of you as you continue your journey of working on behalf of the children of Minnesota. As always, please contact me if I can be of service and have a fabulous summer!

### Leaders Forum

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## STUDENTS FIRST:

# Northwoods Style



Jim Hess  
MASA Past President &  
Superintendent  
Bemidji Area Schools

Most school leaders have heard about Michelle Rhee, an outspoken former Chancellor of Washington, DC Public Schools and her lobbying efforts to transform public education. She helped create Students First, a political lobbying organization with outreach efforts in many states around the country in 2010. This article has absolutely nothing to do with Michelle Rhee or her work. Rather, this article describes a Northern Minnesota community's initiative to help ensure greater student success

through pairing middle school and high school students with community success coaches and focusing on identified student strengths. The program is coincidentally called, "Students First."

It started several years ago at a Community Prosperity Summit attended by the usual suspects: bankers, business people, small manufacturing company representatives, and public sector folks from the city, county, school district, and university. To no one's surprise, we all agreed that an educated workforce was a key to prosperity. That is when I hijacked the agenda by posing an outcome to envision: "What if every secondary student had an individual plan for success and a community coach to support them?" Could this change impact community prosperity, reduce crime rates, enhance work force development, improve health and housing, and of course our big three – improve graduation rates, achievement rates, and attendance rates? Prosperity Summit participants become much more engaged in the discussion as they recognized the powerful potential of this novel concept.

### You want to do what?

Like most improvement strategies, we formed an advisory committee to help guide the process and involve our community as the key ingredient of the solution. How in the world would we recruit, train, and sustain a small army of community success coaches so each student could receive benefit? How would we develop meaningful plans for each secondary student based on their identified strengths and interests? How would we communicate among all participants with safe and appropriate information that would send the right messages and steer clear of disingenuous dribble? How would we pay for all the associated costs of such a program with no budget?

The stars aligned...

Since there were a host of community leaders who originally endorsed this concept at the prosperity summit, the distance from encouraging words to supportive actions was short and swiftly traveled. We enjoyed unprecedented collaboration involving our city and county governments, traditional public school and charter schools, businesses, nonprofits, and local and regional foundations. We all pulled together to endorse actions designed to support youth and community. Human resources, material resources, time, space, technology, and finances were pledged in a remarkable show of support. Competitive grants were written and received to provide setup resources for the first three years of program operation and ensure an adequate timeframe for careful implementation, review, and modification.

Guiding Philosophy	Vision for Students
While some programs focus on "fixing" the problems of our youth, Students First would focus on identifying and nurturing each individual's strengths. This philosophy or "developmental approach" has been proven to ignite motivation and engage students in their futures.	Student participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learn about themselves – individual talents, interests, strengths... what is right about them;</li><li>• develop a sense of hope about their future;</li><li>• develop positive relationships with adults;</li><li>• develop long- and short-term goals;</li><li>• develop a plan to reach goals;</li><li>• learn about career opportunities – connect their talents, interests, and strengths;</li><li>• develop life skills;</li><li>• develop problem-solving skills;</li><li>• develop self-discipline;</li><li>• create a connection to their community.</li></ul>

### Start Small, Build on Success

We started the program with two classes of Bemidji Middle School seventh graders and one class of seventh graders from TrekNorth Charter School. We matched these students with Community Success Coaches. (Several coaches wanted to be paired with more than one student.) Each participant completed the Clifton Strengths Finder 2.0 Assessment or Explorer to help identify interests or talents and introduce them to the strengths language we use throughout the program.

Students First...

Continued on Page 6



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I want to  
be a doctor  
for animals.  
- Kristi, 1<sup>st</sup> grade



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## Students First... Continued from Page 4



Year 1 (2011-2012)	88 Students	77 Success Coaches
Year 2 (2012-2013)	186 Students	170 Success Coaches
Year 3 (2013-2014)	259 Students	253 Success Coaches

Participants completed the Children's Hope Scale, which indicated program success. Hope drives attendance, credits earned, and GPA of high school students. Hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than are high school GPA, SAT, and ACT scores. (Gallup)

### Student Feedback

"I like how you can talk to your coach and get good feedback. That they can help you and it is cool to set goals to achieve them."

"I like the entire concept of Students First, especially the coaching."

"My coach is really nice and supportive. We have common interests and things to talk about."

"I like that this is different than other things I've done in school."

"I like the plan to follow through high school."

"My coach match is outstanding."

"I liked meeting coaches, having a new person that can help me in my life."

"My coach is the best match I could have had."

### Coach Feedback

"History in the making! I love being part of it!"

"Excellent student match. She was open to learning new things and sharing what was important to her."

"My student told me at the last meeting that she worked towards the goal from the goal sheet exercise and she accomplished it! That was rewarding to her."

"My student match was great. When I signed up for the program my biggest concern was communicating with my student. My match was a great communicator and our conversations were fun and engaging."

"I had two students and they were very different. Both of the kids were great matches. It was exciting to have two very different students and have them get a great deal out of the process. I truly enjoyed it and learned a great deal about myself and young students."

### Summary

Education, business, and community leaders started with a new and compelling vision based on the understanding that attracting and retaining talented workers would be key to a successful community. We agreed education of today's students was a critical investment for our community's continued prosperity and we all have a role in the education of our youth. We believe in Bemidji, Minnesota, our number one export can no longer be our young people.

Students First has been described as our community's "moon shot" in that many community leaders agreed to support this novel approach to help students reach their potential through community success coaches and individual success plans. Each year it grows with a new cadre of caring adults and students who benefit from a unique experience and call Bemidji their home.

For more information about Students First, please contact Dr. Jim Hess, at 218-333-3120 or Lara Gerhardson, Students First Coordinator, at 218-333-8042 or visit the website at [www.studentsfirstmn.com](http://www.studentsfirstmn.com)

# Minnevate!

## Two, Four, Six, Eight...

## Why Do We Need to Minnevate!?

One of the most challenging aspects of school leadership is creating and supporting adaptable educational systems that will serve the ever-changing needs of our students. We cannot ignore this rapid, pervasive change—that climate isn't something peeping at us from way beyond the horizon. We are living in the middle of it. In one of his famous TED talks, Sir Ken Robinson called for transformation (a creation of the new), rather than reformation (a remodeling of the old). That talk was given in 2006, *eight years ago*.

Most of our members are in the thick of addressing this continuous transformation and its pervasive nature, not just in the technology that affects every part of our lives, but in the fabric of our communities, the expectations of public organizations, the impacts of economic shift, and the interaction of diverse communities locally and globally. As educators, parents, and community members, we are tasked with preparing students for futures of which we cannot dream.

For years, MASA has been exploring innovation in the practice of educational leadership, and an important aspect of our MASA initiatives is a continuing conversation among our members and our wider community of stakeholders. Last December, MASA began a process to bridge the space between our visions for the future of Minnesota's schools and the realities of today.

Minnevate! is a dialogue process to build an action agenda for Minnesota educational leadership. We call this initiative "Minnevate" because Minnesota has a long and proud history of innovation – in our communities, schools, and businesses. And we know that that spirit of creation and innovation continues throughout our state.

This spring, eight of our MASA Regional Leadership Teams convened their members and wider regional communities to explore how we can prepare kids today for their unpredictable futures. We appreciate how our Minnevate! event participants shared their wisdom and perspective, and we are grateful for their deep thinking and creativity, as well

as their willingness to share generously and courageously their feelings about our kids, schools, communities, and the possibilities ahead.

In these conversations, a point that often emerged is that there is a leadership gap. That is, we do not have a common agenda for education, and no person or organization is leading the creation of a vision and working to actualize it. For MASA, this is a strategic opportunity that we are addressing with Minnevate!

In some of our regional sessions, participants expressed a concern that we are disconnected from each other as individual professionals and as organizations. As we explore our state and regional perspectives, we have the opportunity to craft a common agenda through collaboration, sharing, and learning from one another.

Peter Block writes in his book *Community, the Structure of Belonging*, "Modern society is plagued by fragmentation. The various sectors of our communities—businesses, schools, social service organizations, churches, government—do not work together. They exist in their own worlds. As do so many individual citizens, who long for connection but end up marginalized, their gifts overlooked, their potential contributions lost. This disconnection and detachment makes it hard if not impossible to envision a common future and work towards it together."

To quote the old Pogo cartoon character, "We have met the enemy ... and he is us!"

One important theme that has emerged from our Minnevate! events so far calls on us to consider our assumptions about education, students, and teachers. So often, initiatives that seek to support educational change center on and end by documenting the current landscape. We hope that Minnevate! can dig more deeply and provide a culture for design that begins with a clean slate and engages all stakeholders in conversations focused on developing

Minnevate!...

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# A Local Option: The East Grand Forks Minnevale! Journey



David Pace  
Superintendent  
East Grand Forks Public Schools

How do educators sustain the discussions of Minnevale? How can we bring innovation back to an educational system that has a focus on a one test, one measure, of improvement or success? How can we meet the learning needs of student to be college and career ready? These are the questions and thoughtful discussions many school and classroom leaders are contemplating across Minnesota.

Our choice was a local Minnevale session that had the focus of bringing our school community to the table of how we can meet the needs of our learners. This task was a large undertaking because total attendance was over 175 members of a school community, including staff, school board, parents, community members and students.

The choice for a local session was not designed to have a one-day session to chart a new course in education. This event was more to expose staff, school board, community members and students of what is possible and provide the opportunity for open discussion, then discuss the pathway for those innovators to take a chance. The process used was the same as our regional Minnevale! events and followed the World Café model. The exception, our questions and evaluation focused around our local options for change.

Question 1: What changes in society are changing the need to change education? How do these changes affect our local economy and community?

Main Outcome: Big changes in society that are driving the need to change include: technology, information skills, society, student needs, and social needs.

Question 2: What skills do young people need to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce?

Main Outcome: Skills such as good communication, problem solving, creative thinking and collaboration will continue to be developed and used in the future.

Question 3: How do we as an education community communicate the need to engage all in the changes needed of the development of life long learners?

Main Outcome: We need to continue the community dialogue and be able to think differently about how we create learners.

What is our pathway? It is not truly defined yet, but we have individuals that have embraced significant changes in

their instruction with the day-to-day use of technology that engages students in education and how events in history impacted today instead of just what happened in history. This process has now moved out of the individual classroom to the entire department. We have staff developing their new curriculum based on standards, without the outdated textbooks, to embracing investigation and active learning. This process requires significant work and diligence to stay updated in changing events.

The next steps for East Grand Forks will continue the staff training and discussions along with educating our building leaders to allow creativity in the classroom that is standards based. This has required our school board to allocate significant funds for staff and leadership to develop and evaluate sound methods of instruction, which will benefit the students of ISD 595.

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## Minnevale!... Continued from Page 7

positive futures for education in Minnesota. We hope we can support widespread permission for taking risks, trying new approaches, and propagating through sharing our stories and learning.

We describe Minnevale! as a “co-creative journey.” What does that really mean? Most of us are familiar with the *Shift Happens* or *Did You Know* videos, which feature the quote, “In 2015 co-creation in open information ecosystems will be the predominant paradigm.” This sounds very complex and we are not at all sure what that looks like. But we have seen it in eight of our MASA Regions! People who care about kids and education gathering to share, learn from one another, and together design resources for building and supporting positive futures for education in our state.

The title of this article is kind of a cheer, and kind of a question. A cheer because cheering brings people together with one voice. A question because it asks us to reflect. We are not driving this process toward predetermined answers or solutions; it’s up to us ALL to generate our vision for our common agenda and direction. We are all in this together and every single voice matters.

At our Spring Conference in March, we lit the room with 300 colorful glow sticks, a great symbol of the power of our collective capacity. Let’s keep that vision as we go forward.

Please visit the Minnevale! website (<http://minnevale.mnasa.org>) to see what people around the state are thinking, and add your own data and ideas. This is an ongoing process and every single voice matters. Thank you all for helping with this important process.

Written by Gary M. Amoroso, PhD, MASA Executive Director  
and Mia Urick, MASA Director of Professional Development





"Begin to breakdown silos that have been so solid. Because of new ways of communicating, we might have the chance to do this."



# What Does Minnevate! look like?



"What if the student, teacher and administrator were equal partners?"



"We have an opportunity to go above and beyond the norm, tools, technology, potentially working together - we have an opportunity to take kids further."



# One for the Books

*Three Great Start Graduates reflect on their first year in the Superintendency*

My first year as superintendent has been a whirlwind of new experiences, as I'm sure veteran superintendents can remember. Throughout the year I was reminded of the importance of networking for a superintendent. Being able to call each other for advice, ideas, and support is a necessity in this profession. It seems at every MASA conference, region meeting, and area superintendents meeting I have come back with new ideas for my school district. Throughout the year, 27 new superintendents participated in the Great Start Cohort through MASA. During our time in the Great Start Cohort we've compared stories regarding the number of snow and cold days we've had this school year. I guess it was trial by fire for us new superintendents! I am grateful to MASA for putting on the Great Start Cohort. Throughout the cohort meetings it was helpful to have veteran superintendents share their knowledge and experience. We so appreciate the time they dedicated to us. I would highly recommend participating for anyone new to the superintendent position.

I have found my new position to be challenging, rewarding, and enjoyable. With any new position comes a steep learning curve. I look forward to the curve leveling off a little each year. I wish all the superintendents of Minnesota well in 2014-2015.

*Andrew Almos  
Superintendent, East Central Public Schools*



As I reflect on my first year as a superintendent, my first thought is it's going amazingly fast. My second realization is the number of situations and events that have occurred are far too numerous to even remember without looking back at the calendar and other notes. The good news is, most of these situations and events had very positive outcomes for the district which has made my first year as superintendent a great experience. I have been stretched and challenged beyond what I imagined might be possible. But in that, I have learned and grown both personally and professionally in a deeply fulfilling way. This year has reaffirmed my passion for education and belief that by working as a team, we can provide opportunities for all students to be successful.

There are some things I learned early in the year that were important guideposts for me along the way. I quickly realized I don't have all the answers, actually very few. Therefore, I learned to reach out to other experts both internal and external. I will be forever grateful to the area superintendents that called to welcome me and extended their support and knowledge.

The Great Start workshops have been another important part of the success of my first year. Topics covered were very timely to the issues needing attention at that particular time of the year. I learned valuable strategies from the presenters. I was exposed to many experts in the field, several of whom have provided on-going support. I also appreciated the number of resources made available to have in my toolbox in anticipation of issues I might encounter. Most importantly, I enjoyed the networking opportunity that Great Start provided.

I have learned the importance of clear vision, specific goals, on-going communication, and a steady faith in the role as superintendent. And as a ball player once expressed in an interview at the end of his rookie season, I think the game will slow down for me next year.

*Diane Cordes  
Superintendent, Breckenridge Public Schools*

One for the Books...  
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## One for the Books... Continued from Page 10



One year ago, I was signing a new contract which added the responsibilities of a superintendent to my contract as principal. I'd completed my coursework and felt prepared, but the reality of my first year as a superintendent has been one of the most stressful, overwhelming, and, fortunately, rewarding experiences I've ever lived through.

As I look back on this year, the biggest thing that stands out is the urgency of meeting deadlines. My first summer as a superintendent had me constantly checking the calendar to see what the next submission date was for something that needed to be turned in to MDE. I quickly reached the decision that I needed to get all these key dates recorded on my master calendar so that I could plan ahead a little more efficiently in the future. One of the most valuable things I received at a Great Start workshop was a master calendar of board agenda items which included the dates that all of these state submissions needed to be approved.

My first summer dropped me into the middle of negotiations. As part of the team, I constantly had to work to determine my role in the process. It was a good place to start building my relationship with the board, however, and the foundations we developed at that point for working together in a constructive way has continued throughout the year.

Balancing my life has been the biggest challenge for me during this first year as a superintendent. I have a unique situation in which I'm the principal, the curriculum coordinator, and the Title I coordinator along with being superintendent. Trying to fit in the responsibilities of all of these roles along with having a personal life, has been a juggling act. I've found my superintendent tasks have had to take the highest priority, and at times that means other areas haven't been as effective as I would have liked.

Overall, this has been a good year. I've learned a lot, and my staff has been incredibly patient with me as I've made my way through the challenges of the job. I look forward to next year when I can start from a place of experience and can move ahead to meet my goals in a way that continues to benefit my district.

*Kirsten Hutchison*  
*Superintendent/Principal, Comfrey Public Schools*

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Registration materials are available on the MASA website: [www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org). Questions? Call (651)789-4061 or email: [aranallo@mnasa.org](mailto:aranallo@mnasa.org)

**FIRST SESSION IS AUGUST 6, 2014!**

## What Does *Visionary Leadership* Look Like?

### STAYING POSITIVE



Brian Dietz  
Superintendent  
Centennial School District

No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, 21st Century Learning, World's Best Workforce...over the past eight years of being a superintendent in California and Minnesota, I have constantly heard of these initiatives as well as hundreds of others that are dubbed as game changers for education. The notion that education is failing and that we must revamp our schools has gone from water cooler talk to tweets, texts, and Facebook posts. Regardless,

we persevere and seek out each and every day to find the good in what we do. Rather than fixating on our potential deficits and shortcomings, my leadership style focuses on connecting, sharing, and finding the positives. These aren't earth shattering notions, rather, a collection of strategies that have worked for me. We all have a story to tell and we need to remind ourselves that our stories matter.

Listening is crucial.

As leaders, we are expected to have answers to problems and be able to deploy solutions that change the landscape and move the district forward. I argue that before acting, we must stop, listen, and reflect. I have been trained in Cognitive Coaching and truly use it every day. I spend time engaging students in listening sessions, staff in formal meetings geared towards building relationships and collaborative problem solving, and focus groups and think tanks with parents and community members to test ideas and gain perspective on how we are doing. These insights provide us with important perspective and help shape our decisions. It truly illuminates a path that is recognizable and should be followed to meet the needs of all learners.

Staying positive!

We are all doing great things in our districts but do we spend enough time talking about it? As you get a lay of the land, it is vital to determine what makes your district special and to talk about it often. Coming to Centennial, our reputation was solid yet we were humble in sharing our successes. Since my arrival, we have taken the chapters of our story and developed the key messages about our district. The words on the page speak about our outstanding academic stature, the family-oriented environment, and the wonderful services we are providing to advance our students. Now, our words resonate within our communities and speak to the work we are doing. During site visits, PTA meetings, and community functions, that message, supported by evidence and proof

points, become the foundation of our story; one which speaks to our promise, vision, and desire to move Centennial forward.

Make yourself available and accessible.

The game changer for me is getting out to events and activities within our communities. I thoroughly enjoy going to where the stakeholders are and being in their environment. It allows me to learn the details behind 'our story'. Another added bonus is I get the pleasure of seeing the best in our students and celebrating their success with our community of learners. These opportunities are meaningful and truly provide the backdrop for the stories I share with our communities. To top it off, I also attend community functions that allow me accessibility to our stakeholders in a very open, comfortable environment. It makes conversations genuine and humanizes me. To them, I am not just as a superintendent, but a husband, father, community member, educator, and leader.

The great part about leadership is that we all have a different approach. That's what makes us unique and allows us to personalize our style to our own districts. Hopefully, this gives you things to consider as you grow as a leader. Your presence matters and is an opportunity for you to tell the story, one that inspires, captures the heart of your community, and honors the work of all. That's the story we all want to tell.

---

### CREATING THE SHIFT



Pam Miller  
Director of Teaching & Learning  
Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools

Isn't it great arriving at work every morning knowing you will never achieve the vision you have in mind for your students? I believe it's one of the most invigorating aspects of our work as district leaders. As change is made, programs are implemented, new learning is acquired, and the vision shifts ever so slightly. And as that vision shifts, the desired target follows. We can work harder and faster, but as we

do, the vision continues to redefine itself and continues to shift. That's the beauty of district leadership. It's finding that delicate balance of consistent practice to evaluate current achievement with the burning desire to allow for essential experimentation, risk-taking, and yes, failure, to discover

Visionary Leadership...  
Continued on Page 14



## Visionary Leadership... Continued from Page 12

new directions in support of even more valuable learning experiences for students. As district leaders, we cannot afford to sit back and wait for the vision to happen. We must create the shift.

**¶¶ *That's the beauty of district leadership. It's finding that delicate balance of consistent practice to evaluate current achievement with the burning desire to allow for essential experimentation, risk-taking, and yes, failure, to discover new directions in support of even more valuable learning experiences for students.***

University of St. Thomas and led by our well-known MASA colleague Jane Sigford, a group of twelve secondary teachers was chosen through application to participate in a learning community throughout the 2013-14 school year. The group met for five hours monthly after the student contact day (aren't teachers exhausted by then?!). They committed to reading six education-related books, engaged in professional dialogue, challenged each other's thinking, and put new practices into place in their classrooms. Each fellow also looked deeply through eleven other windows within our district, discovering strengths about their colleagues they never had been given an opportunity to see before.

As a leader, I didn't have to do much. Once the general direction and the logistics were set, I could step back and let it happen. This is the most important detail of all. It was during an April 2013 TED Talk that Sir Ken Robinson remarked the necessity for us to champion conditions that create a "climate of possibilities." I have not experienced any other professional development effort as valuable and effective as the BHM Leadership Fellows in recent years. As we celebrated together with the Fellows during a culminating program hosted at the University of St. Thomas, my heart filled with pride for the growth of the educators who spoke about their own personal journeys, as well as for the public school students for whom the benefits of this program exist.

Create the shift. Don't wait for it to happen on its own. Let's move.

## STUDENT DEDICATION



John Cselovzski  
Superintendent  
Sleepy Eye Public Schools

Legislative themes, slogans, and programs come and go. The visionary work that leads to success is very basic. That work revolves around the concept of "students and their learning come first". In Sleepy Eye, that is our goal!

Challenging demographics, private and public schools competing for students, fluctuating student population (migrants), and rural traditions can all be seen as excuses; but not

in our community. Sleepy Eye Public School has embraced these challenges and demonstrated that what really matters is quality instructional leaders who are dedicated to their students.

Initiatives taken by our district include: an original member of the Flexible Learning Year (FLY), extensive curriculum review, working with the migrant school, and parental involvement. The first initiative was being a member of the FLY. The FLY allowed us to maximize our professional development time and pool resources with other districts to bring in experts in areas we wanted more information on. The FLY also allowed a flexible calendar, which allowed us to maximize our student contact time prior to testing. A second initiative occurred approximately five years ago, when our district decided to conduct a curriculum audit in response to inadequate test scores. As a result of that audit, teachers and administration worked jointly on redesigning our curriculum around the Minnesota standards. This concerted effort, along with the establishment of professional learning communities, allowed staff to focus on student achievement. In 2012, a third initiative was established. Federal funds became available to build and support a migrant school. This public school district worked collaboratively with this project providing land for the building. This program ensures that our migrant population can have access to education year round. The last initiative I want to mention is one that has been a constant in our pursuit of academic excellence and that is increased parental involvement/communications. The district utilizes a family liaison and this position is a bridge between cultures. Our district has also made upgrades to our website and has started utilizing robo calls for reminders to our parents.

These four initiatives have taken dedication, focus, time, and shared leadership to implement. However, at this time our district has reaped the rewards of these efforts. In the fall of 2013, Sleepy Eye Public Elementary was recognized as a Reward School. The work continues and our staff is driven by our successes to continue to offer the best education possible to all students!

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# SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE MINNESOTA SCHOOLS ACT

*Effective July 1, 2014, Minnesota public schools must comply with extensive new legislative aimed at preventing and prohibiting bullying.*



Susan E. Torgerson  
Education Law Attorney  
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

Effective at the start of the 2014-2015 school year, Minnesota public schools must comply with extensive new legislation aimed at preventing and prohibiting bullying. The law contains detailed new definitions of bullying and of prohibited conduct. It requires that each district adopt a policy with specified components prior to the start of the coming school year.

The Commissioner of Education will establish a complaint process which may be used by students, parents and educators to file complaints about alleged noncompliance with the law. In addition, a state model policy will be developed by the Commissioner of Education in consultation with the Commissioner of Human Rights.

Prior to the start of the 2014-2015 school year, school districts need to:

1. Obtain and review the legislation;
2. Adopt the required policy through board action and submit it to the Commissioner of Education; and,
3. Develop internal procedures for implementation of the policy which include, but are not limited to:
  - a. training staff and informing contractors (a training cycle must be created which does not exceed a period of three years, and all new personnel must receive training within the first year of employment);
  - b. informing students and parents of the policy and their rights and responsibilities;
  - c. incorporating the policy into the district's disciplinary policy;
  - d. reviewing and updating special education team procedures for compliance with the law;
  - e. establishing best practices, including preventive and remedial measures for deterring policy violations;
  - f. defining roles and responsibilities of students, school personnel and volunteers under the policy;
  - g. posting the new policy as required by the statute;
  - h. including the policy in the student handbook;



April 9, 2014 - Governor Mark Dayton signs the Safe and Supportive Schools Act. ©StarTribune.com

- i. giving the policy to each employee and independent contractors who interact with students;
- j. placing the policy on the district or school website in the languages appearing on the site; and,
- k. designating a staff member in each building as the primary contact to receive reports of prohibited conduct and to implement the policy and procedures of the district.

The new law states that when an evaluation by an IEP or Section 504 team indicates that the child's disability affects social skills development or the child is vulnerable to prohibited conduct because of disability, the plan may address the skills and proficiencies the child needs to refrain from engaging in and responding to prohibited conduct as defined in the law. Thus, evaluation and planning teams should be aware of the law's requirements for students with disabilities.

Interestingly, the law also requires that when districts allow non-curricular student groups access to school facilities, the district must give all such groups equal access regardless of the content of the group member's speech. Thus, districts should review their policies and procedures for student group access to school facilities in light of this requirement.

Safe and Supportive Schools...  
Continued on Page 17



## Safe and Supportive Schools... Continued from Page 16

In addition, the law:

- Establishes a school safety technical assistance council and center for assisting districts in improving school climate and safety
- Does not establish a private right of action
- Does not interfere with a person's rights of religious expression and free speech
- Addresses cyber bullying
- Applies to home school and non public school students at times, such as when they are voluntarily participating in a public school co-curricular or extra-curricular activity

### Conclusion

The new law is extensive and requires numerous provisions to be in place at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. While the law creates no private right of action against schools, prohibited conduct toward members of protected groups may be actionable under other provisions of state and federal law. Thus, failures to implement successful protections, especially for protected group members, could pose legal issues for schools.

It is imperative that each public school district immediately take steps to become knowledgeable about the requirements of the law and to begin preparations for immediate compliance. Finally, districts should contact the MDE for current information on model policy development and other supports.



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## Evaluation and Individual Professional Development: Leading from the Top



Charlie Kyte  
Consultant  
PEER Solutions

It seems that the whole world is evaluating educators these days. When well done, quality evaluations can lead to better and targeted professional development. Effective professional development leads to better administrating and teaching and the result can be better instruction and thus, better student learning. Poorly done evaluations can suck up time and lead to less than desirable results.

It is important that leaders of districts and of individual schools demonstrate a commitment to quality evaluation beginning with themselves. Interestingly, the only professional roles in school districts where evaluations aren't mandated by law in Minnesota are for those in these top district positions.

Minnesota, like many other states has progressively mandated that more and more of our professional educators be evaluated annually. It began when the statute was passed requiring non-tenured teachers be evaluated three times in each of their non-tenured years. I believe this statute was passed in either the late 1980's or early 1990's.

Next to come online were the evaluations of principals. I was actually executive director of MASA at the time this law was passed and the professional associations worked hard to have the law as reasonable as possible (you should have seen some of the earlier versions!). Principals were mandated for evaluation beginning this year 2013-14.

The evaluation of all teachers is just now coming online with the first mandated evaluations due in 2014-15. Many districts have already been preparing for this effort, which will take a lot of time and energy on the part of principals and peer coaches.

The state mandates for each of these evaluation processes are cumbersome and the rules and rubrics adopted by the MDE-led teams are both complete and complex. A number of small and larger private firms have attempted to help by designing evaluation and professional development systems. One such system, currently used by 71 districts, is the one designed by Greg Vandal and myself for principals by our

firm, PEER Solutions. An online assisted evaluation system is also in development to be utilized by districts in September.

A good superintendent evaluation system should include a self-evaluation process, an optional stakeholder survey component and an evaluation by the school board coordinated by either the board chair or a designated board member. The system should acknowledge the annual goals for the superintendent, produce a professional level evaluation document and lead to the development of a 'smart goal' driven professional development plan for the following year.

As professional staff engage in annual evaluations, it is important for them to see that their leaders are using similar systems for themselves and that the whole organization—from top to bottom—is engaging in a responsible improvement effort.

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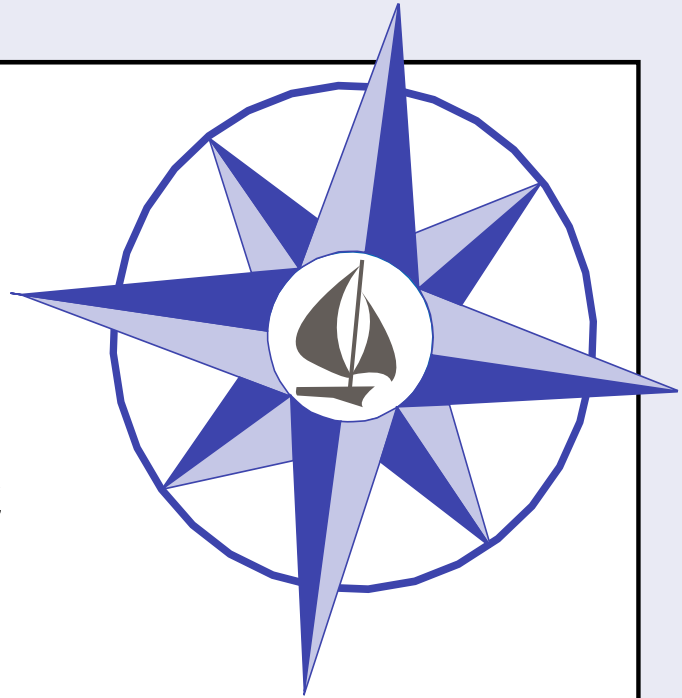
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## 2014 "UNSESSION" HIGHLIGHTS



Valerie Dosland  
EWALD  
MASA Lobbyist

The 2014 Legislative Session adjourned May 16, several days before the Constitutional adjournment date. With a later start date and an aggressive agenda, session was anything but an "Unsession." We saw the passage of the Safe and Supportive Schools Act, the Health Insurance Transparency Act, the Omnibus Education Policy Bill and the Supplemental Budget Bill.

The supplemental budget bill appropriates \$54 million for E12 education. This is lower than the House at \$75 million and higher than the Senate at \$41.5 million. With this new spending target, it came down to really finding a compromise that met the priorities of both bodies. The final agreement reflects that. Provisions include:

- \$25 per pupil formula increase
- \$4.65 million for English Language Learners
- \$10 million for teacher evaluation
- \$1.8 million for School Readiness
- \$4.65 million for Early Childhood Family Education
- \$4.65 million for Early Learning Scholarships

This session we also saw the passage of a stand-alone Education Policy Bill, which does not always occur. This bill includes two significant policy changes. First, the bill includes major reforms to the approach on educating English Language Learners (ELL). This proposal makes systematic changes and focuses on ELL success throughout the education statutes. This includes teacher preparation on effective ways to teach ELL students, helping the youngest ELL students in early learning programs, supporting adult English Learners, as well as increasing ELL parental involvement.

Second, the bill tackles the MN Teacher Licensure Exam, one of the more controversial provisions. Many were concerned about the level of difficulty established for teacher licensure candidates to achieve a qualifying score, which indicating this level is well beyond a college entrance level. Legislators heard about qualified candidates not being able to pass the test and concerns were raised that the exams were biased against minority candidates and an unfair hurdle for foreign-language-immersion teachers.

Under this bill, candidates unable to pass the basic skills exam, the can instead show comparable scores on college entrance exams such as ACT or SAT. The bill also exempts non-native English speakers if they meet the pedagogy and content criteria.

Once again, health insurance took center stage. The Health Insurance Transparency Act passed after many changes and heated debate. The final bill requires districts to seek

three bids for insurance every two years, unless agreed to otherwise. Districts must seal the bids for a set time and then open them in the presence of the largest bargaining unit. Districts retain the right to determine which insurance carriers to negotiate with and they can continue to negotiate with carriers after they open the initial proposals. The final bill also includes exemptions for self-insure school districts and districts that insure over 1000 lives.

Every session provides us opportunities and challenges. This session was no different. Thanks to all of you who contacted your legislators. We know this is a busy time in your school districts, but your relationships and connections help us in our work at the Capitol.

Please visit the MASA blog for the complete 2014 Legislative Session Summary: [mnasa.typepad.com/voice\\_of\\_mn\\_education](http://mnasa.typepad.com/voice_of_mn_education)

### Have you renewed your MASA 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](mailto:members@mnasa.org)). Visit our website at ([www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org)).

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### MASA Foundation Grants Available!

The MASA Foundation will provide up to 10 grants to members this year for professional development experiences that you would not be able to access through your district or that are unique learning opportunities. Grants can range from \$500-\$750. To apply, simply submit a one page summary of your intended experience and either mail or fax it to the MASA offices (651-645-7518) or email Gary Amoroso ([gamoroso@mnasa.org](mailto:gamoroso@mnasa.org)), and the Foundation Grant Committee will consider it in a timely manner.



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## Election Results



Jeff Ronneberg  
Superintendent  
Spring Lake Park Schools

Congratulations to the following candidates who have been elected to MASA leadership positions. Newly elected leaders will participate in a orientation with the full MASA Board of Directors this summer. 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:** Jeff Ronneberg, Superintendent, Spring Lake Park Schools

**Treasurer:** Chris Richardson, Superintendent, Northfield Public Schools

### Board Members:

*Region 5* - Jamie Skjeveland, Crosby-Ironton  
*Metro Area Curriculum* - Barb Knudsen, Lakeville  
*Metro Special Education* - Darren Kermes, SouthWest Metro Educational Cooperative  
*Greater MN Curriculum* - Pam Miller, Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose  
*Service Provider* - Jeremy Kovash, Lakes Country Service Cooperative

### Minnesota Representatives to the AASA Governing Board:

Dan Brooks, Sauk Centre  
Curt Tryggestad, Eden Prairie

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

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**Superintendent of the Year 2015**

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School board members, parents, colleagues and community members may nominate, superintendents may also be self-nominate. More information and application materials are available on the AASA website ([soy.aasa.org](http://soy.aasa.org)). **Completed nominations must be received online at AASA by August 1, 2014.** Questions? [pdearden@aasa.org](mailto:pdearden@aasa.org).

*Thank you to ATS&R Planners/Architects/Engineers for their sponsorship of the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year Program*

## Transitions

*\*As of June 3, 2014*

### **Retirees (Alphabetical by Last Name):**

**Everett Arnold**, Red Lake School District  
**Eric Bartleson**, Houston Public Schools  
**Norman Baumgarn**, Climax-Shelly School  
**Robert Belluzzo**, Hibbing Public Schools  
**Dennis Carlson**, Anoka-Hennepin School District  
**Ollen Church**, Norman County West Public Schools  
**Michael Conner**, Isle Public Schools  
**Steven Dooley**, Albany Area Schools  
**Michael Doro**, Northland Community  
**Keith Erickson**, Albert Lea Area Schools  
**Ron Evjen**, Hayfield Community Schools  
**Anita Grace**, Cass Lake-Bena Schools  
**Loren Hacker**, MACCRAY School District  
**Scott Hannon**, Winona Area Schools  
**Herb Hilinski**, Floodwood School  
**Jane Holmberg**, Intermediate School District 287  
**Daniel Jett**, West Metro Education Program  
**Dean Krogstad**, Henning School  
**Jerry Martinson**, Hancock Public Schools  
**Boyd McLarty**, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Schools  
**Nordy Nelson**, International Falls  
**Jeffrey Olson**, Saint Peter Public Schools  
**John Peterka**, Osakis Public Schools  
**Nancy Rajanen**, Waconia Public Schools  
**Allen Ralston**, Clearbrook-Gonvick Minnesota School District  
**Steve Rassier**, Nevis Public School  
**Robert Slotterback**, Richfield Public Schools  
**Michael Spanier**, Sartell-St. Stephen Schools  
**Denny Ulmer**, Bemidji Regional Interdistrict Council  
**John Varner**, Onamia Schools  
Deb Wall, Forest Lake Area Schools  
**Ann Wendorff**, Heron Lake-Okabena/Southwest Star Concept Schools  
**Ellen Voit**, Robbinsdale Area Schools

*Congratulations on your retirement!*

Transitions...  
Continued on Page 23

## 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 Deb a call (651/645-6272 or 866/444-5251), fax her a note (651/645-7518), or email her at [members@mnasa.org](mailto: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.

## Transitions...

### Continued from Page 22

#### **District Changes (Alphabetical by Last Name):**

**David Bernhardson**, South Washington County Schools

to Inver Grove Heights Community Schools

**Steven Heyd**, GHEC Public Schools to Tennessee

**Rochelle Johnson**, Pine Point School to Cass Lake-Bena Schools

**Craig Junker**, Lake City Schools to Totino Grace

**Brian Koslofsky**, Bertha-Hewitt Public Schools to MACCRAY School District

**David Law**, White Bear Lake Area Schools to Anoka-Hennepin School District

**Corey Lunn**, Stillwater Area Public Schools to Iowa

**Wayne Olson**, Campbell-Tintah Public Schools to Clearbrook-Gonvick Minnesota School District

**Steve Razidlo**, Brainerd Public Schools to Austria

**Steve Sallee**, Southland/LeRoy-Ostrander Public Schools to St. Louis County Schools

**Steve Unowsky**, Saint Paul Public Schools to Richfield Public Schools

**Stephen West**, Eden Prairie Schools to Winona Area Schools

**Klint Willert**, Marshall Public Schools to Brainerd Public Schools

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- LifeTouch for providing our portrait studio and photographing our events
- Springsted Incorporated for their year-long support of the MASA Great Start Cohort
- Kraus-Anderson Construction Company for supporting our At Ruth's Table Event

*The spring MASA Foundation Silent Auction was a huge success! Thanks to all who donated auction items and participated in the bidding! This year's auction made \$1,997 to support professional development for school leaders.*

*We'd also like to thank our 86 exhibitors who shared their latest products and services! Our exhibitors provide significant support for our conference and we appreciate their participation.*

# Calendar of Events...

## 2014

### June

**19-20**

MASA Board of Directors Retreat  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

### August

**5-6**

MDE Back-to-School Conference  
Marriott, Brooklyn Park

**6**

MASA Great Start Cohort I  
Marriott, Brooklyn Park

**14**

MASA Foundation Board Meeting  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

### September

**28**

MASA Foundation Golf Tournament  
Pine Beach West Golf Course, Brainerd

**28**

MASA Great Start Cohort II  
Madden's, Brainerd

**28-30**

MASA Fall Conference  
Madden's, Brainerd

### November

**12**

MASA Great Start III  
Cragun's, Brainerd

**12-14**

CLM Fall Conference  
Cragun's, Brainerd

**27-28**

MASA Offices Closed

### December

**24-26**

MASA Offices Closed

## Stay Connected to MASA!

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



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