



Summer 2015

## A Year as President: My Top 10



Lynne Kovash  
MASA President and  
Superintendent  
Moorhead Area Public Schools

**T**hank you for the opportunity to spend this year as president of MASA. I have been privileged to work together with the MASA Board to help refine our focus and vision. I decided to compile a list of the top 10 things I learned this year as MASA president.

**10. There are lots of opportunities to walk in Washington, D.C.** As part of the MASA Federal Advocacy, a team from Minnesota walks many miles to visit AASA offices, the Department of Education and legislators to advocate on the part of students, teachers, staff and administrators in Minnesota.

**9. There are many miles and many districts in the great state of Minnesota.** Our executive director travels to all ends of Minnesota to meet with the regions. We appreciate the miles and information provided by the executive director. Whether we are from the Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southeast or Southwest, we have the opportunity to hear highlights about the Legislative session or other items affecting our school districts.

**8. Conferences are a great way to network and share.** The conferences provide a foundation of professional networking and sharing. Most of the networking and sharing happens around the conference, but it is also wonderful to be able to share with professionals in our organization.

**7. Our MASA staff works hard to provide strong professional development.** The committees and board provide direction and vision regarding the conferences. The staff works hard to ensure the facilities, speakers, breakout sessions and socializing opportunities. We appreciate the hard work and professional opportunities provided by the staff at MASA. Thank you for all you do.

**6. Component groups provide strength for our organization.** We added a technology component group this year. The partnerships, different views and the expertise of all our members and groups make us a stronger organization. Thank you to all the component groups.

**5. We have a strong support network.** Support is provided through MASA's peer support teams. When we have questions we are able to contact the executive director, superintendents from around the state, curriculum directors or technology directors to have the support we need.

**4. We are pretty lucky here in Minnesota.** Opportunities to meet with other state leaders at AASA conferences and events provide opportunities to find out about the issues facing other states. As we discuss the issues surrounding public education and financing, we do have support from our Legislature and other leaders.

**3. We all care about our students.** Our organization is one of the state organizations that has students at the core. Our tagline says, "Our common agenda, children." Those words are reflected in our belief statements and our strategic plan.

A Year as President, *continued on page 9.*

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# Summer: A Great Time to Reflect

*What lessons did life teach you in the past year?*



Gary Amoroso  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of  
School Administrators

I hope each of you had a rewarding and successful 2014-2015 school year. At this time of year, I believe it is imperative for you to take some time to reflect upon your year. Craig Jarrow, author of *Time Management Ninja*, suggests 10 questions that we need to consider in our reflections.

- 1. Where did you succeed?** What achievement are you most proud of from the past year? What were your wins? Celebrating even the small wins is important. Remember the times you were on top of your game.
- 2. What did you enjoy most?** Are you passionate about your work? Your relationships? Make sure you are enjoying the journey *today*. It's important to enjoy yourself each and every day.
- 3. Where did you fail?** Looking at your own failures can be tough, but it is a necessary exercise. If you want to move forward, you must be honest about where you were not successful. Maybe it was something that you didn't give your all, or perhaps something you said you were going to do, but didn't.

- 4. What regrets do you have?** What opportunity did you pass up? What do you wish you had spent more time doing? These questions can be painful to answer, but they can help you remedy similar situations in the future.
- 5. What lessons did you learn?** You should always be learning. What lessons did life teach you in the past year? Understanding them will help you grow and be ready for similar situations in the future.
- 6. What will you do differently?** The one thing you can control is *yourself*. What will you do differently in the coming year? Don't blame others for your behavior. Your attitude is a choice; make sure you choose a good one.
- 7. What is the status of your goals?** Where do your goals stand? Did you reach them? Review each of your large goals and determine their status. Maybe you need to spend more effort on them, or even change them entirely. (See #10.)
- 8. What do you need to do more of?** What do you need to spend more time doing? What activities and goals are not getting enough of your time?
- 9. What do you need to stop doing?** What do you need to stop doing in the next year? Maybe you have a bad habit (or two). Try replacing negative behaviors with new positive ones.
- 10. What are your new goals for the next year?** Reviewing and revising your goals is an important exercise. Your new goals may be entirely new, or they may be modifications of existing ones. Your goals should be adaptable and you should always be course-correcting, to stay on target to success.

I sincerely hope you take the time to reflect upon the past year. Thank you for your dedication to the children of Minnesota. All of us at MASA look forward to working with you during the upcoming school year. As always, please contact me if I can be of assistance: 651-319-1211(mobile); gamoroso@mnasa.org

The *Leaders Forum* is your newsletter and we welcome your input. Please send your ideas, district news, and articles to Dave Christians at dchristians@mnasa.org. Past copies of our newsletter are available at mnasa.org.

## Leaders Forum

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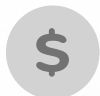
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### MASA Offers a Variety of Online Professional Learning Opportunities and Resources

Each year, MASA's Executive Development Committee works to identify and address the professional learning needs of our members. In addition to our traditional conferences and workshops, the MASA website is equipped with a variety of just-in-time online professional learning options and leadership resources, including:

**Whitewater Learning.** An affordable online library of high-quality modules that align with state and national competencies and offer pre-approved teacher and administrator CEUs.

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**What We Are Reading.** Each month our book blogger publishes a book review, complete with book notes and discussion questions. This is a great resources for staff development exercises, a teaching tool during lectures, or if you simply enjoy a good book.

**Voice of MN Education blog.** Each week we publish a blog post or video from Gary Amoroso to inform our members of organization news, share legislative updates, or feature our colleagues as guest bloggers.

**Professional Assistance Team (PAT).** MASA members may need advice or consultation as they run into new or difficult situations. The PAT members have offered to use their experiences to help their colleagues navigate these situations. You can find a list of PAT members on the MASA website, and may contact anyone of them as you seek assistance.







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# Outcomes of All-Day Kindergarten Programs

*Providing equity among all students so that each incoming first-grader has a higher level of preparedness.*

### Forest Lake Viewpoint

Linda M. Madsen, Ph.D.  
Superintendent  
Forest Lake Area Schools

Since the inception of all-day kindergarten, Forest Lake Area Schools has seen some substantial growth and progress in student readiness for first grade.

Katie Lorenz, first grade teacher at Forest View Elementary, states that students entering first grade after a year of all-day kindergarten show greater stamina for learning. Forest Lake Area Schools implemented all-day kindergarten a year earlier than many other Minnesota districts. Since that implementation, first grade teachers see students more equitably prepared for the rigor that is now at the first grade level.

*Students entering first grade after a year of all-day kindergarten show greater stamina for learning.*

Prior to implementing all-day kindergarten for all students, some students attended kindergarten for half days or with every other day option. First grade teachers admitted that it was often easy to notice differences in readiness levels between students from the differing options. All-day kindergarten students were better prepared for the stamina of all day first grade. Those differences in readiness and stamina have diminished with the implementation of all-day kindergarten for all.

Another benefit has been quantifiably observed through those first grade students who qualify for service through the intervention program, Reading Recovery. Laurie Chelgren, Title I teacher for Forest Lake's Central Learning Center and Wyoming Elementary School, tracked assessments over the course of three years and noticed higher scores among students.

Lower performing first graders are identified for intervention service through the Reading Recovery assessment that addresses six different domains. The assessment is rated on a grading scale with ones and twos being the lowest possible scores. In her first year, Laurie identified 14 students who scored ones and twos across the six domains, 12 students in her second year and only five students in her third year. Of those 5 students, none had been with Forest Lake Area Schools for their entire kindergarten year. They either moved

in part way through kindergarten or at the beginning of first grade. This data would indicate that something positive was happening for those students who attended all-day kindergarten in Forest Lake.

Our district has seen some very positive effects of all-day, every-day kindergarten. Being able to provide that equity among all students so that each incoming first-grader has a higher level of preparedness — as well as reducing the number of students struggling with reading — are all important factors in our success as educators.

### Elk River Viewpoint

Mark Bezek, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Elk River Area School District

In Elk River, we actually committed ourselves to enhanced kindergarten one year before a Minnesota state law requiring all-day kindergarten went into effect. Two years ago, we launched a 5.5-hour kindergarten program that exceeded our registration expectations and put us in position to seamlessly rollout all-day kindergarten last fall.

Families throughout the Elk River area were telling us before we developed our program, and before the Legislature became involved, that they wanted all-day kindergarten for their children. Embracing expanded kindergarten was also identified as a priority during our strategic planning process.

As we know, the research is clear, all-day kindergarten is significantly better for a student's education than half day programs. All-day kindergarten means students are getting a solid start in their emotional, social and academic development.

*The research is clear, all-day kindergarten is significantly better for a student's education than half day programs.*

This fall, our first all-day kindergarten experience has gone extremely well. Our families have voiced satisfaction with the quality of our program and our staff feels confident that this year's class of kindergarten students is going to be more prepared to flourish and succeed in first grade.

In the Elk River our mission is to educate, inspire and empower. I think it's clear that engaging with kindergarten students in an all-day environment will help us better fulfill that mission.



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# Building Early Childhood Programs for ALL Children



Jackie Johnston  
Director  
Eastern Carver County Schools  
Community Education

I have to believe we are far past the conversation about the value and importance of early childhood learning. The evidence is clear: a young child's brain thrives on rich learning experiences. Children who begin kindergarten behind their peers struggle to ever catch up. Language acquisition is a reflection of learning context and environment. Foundations built by age three have a great bearing on children's progress for many years to come.

During a child's early life the caregiver is responsible for most, if not all, social simulation, language

and communication development. As a result, the interaction of parents/teachers/caregivers is of critical consequence as it lays a critical foundation for how children process information many years down the road. Therefore, it is essential that high quality early learning programs focus on executive function and social-emotional development. The programs must involve parents as the primary teachers of children, and personalize learning to children's development and needs through developmentally appropriate practice, and a language-rich learning environment steeped in a wide range of experiences.

How do we do all of this for ALL children? Research documents the long reaching implications of the socio-economic divide. Providing high quality learning programs for our low-income children is not optional. What are the resources available to the public education system? Currently the state of MN supplies a variety of funding streams that can be accessed to provide educational services for Preschool-K children and their parents/caregivers. The state provides minimal funding for the school-based School Readiness program. Currently, that state aid equals \$175 per every low SES pre-K child.

Increased funding is essential for children whose families do not have resources that support high quality learning opportunities. These are most often parents who themselves have a lower level of education and limited access to resources that would allow them to offer quality learning opportunities for their children within their home environments. Community outreach to support families where they live is an important component of state funded school based programs. Understanding that some cultures believe children

should be home during the first 5 years of life, home visiting is another way to reach children and families while respecting their familial beliefs. School districts receive a minimal home visiting levy for this purpose, producing a system that is grossly underfunded.

Family literacy is an effective model to simultaneously educate children and parents using state and federal funds. However, there is no designated funding for this model, so it requires district leadership to execute internal partnerships to effectively implement this model to address these needs. Combining resources and services between Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness, Early Childhood Special Education and school based preschool programs opens the door to well-rounded services for all learners.

In addition to state and federal funding, communities need to increase partnerships between schools, Head Start, private and home childcare providers. School-based early learning programs have the ability to back-map the curriculum with K-12 and share resources. Working with community providers will increase the success of all children.

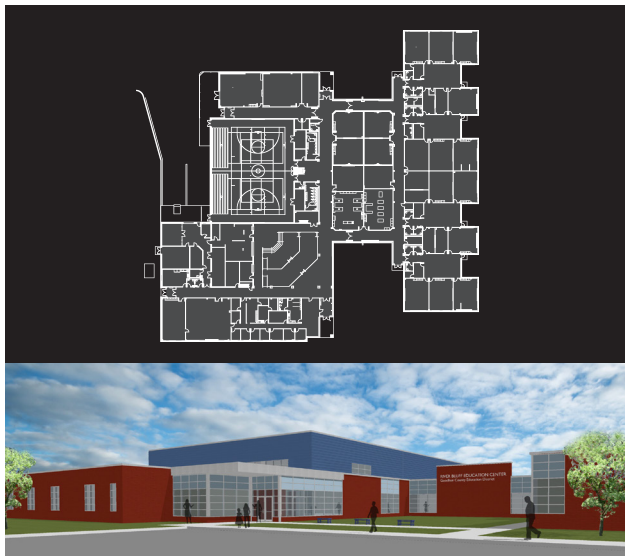
As Minnesota becomes increasingly diverse, it is essential that early education programs and service providers receive training and awareness of culture and familial expectations to best understand and meet the needs of all children. We know that transportation and childcare are the largest barriers for families. Therefore, it is vital that we make the effort to go into the community and ensure that resources are available to families where they live.

Our teachers need to be willing to learn how to adapt their classroom structures. We cannot expect families to adapt. Early education is not compulsory so if we want to reach all children prior to kindergarten, our programs have to be seen as welcoming, culturally relevant and informative. Using a language/culture support liaison can not only help with language barriers, but can be a link that helps the district understand the families and the families understand the district. We have found them to be critical in our work.


However, research is quick to point out that early education should not be thrust in the K-12 stream. It can be tempting to think the solution is to make early childhood, or at least pre-K, look more like the K-12 system. But that would be wrong. Young children have unique early learning needs, and the educational approaches — to instruction, curriculum and assessment — that work best for young children and are

Building Early Childhood Programs, *continued on page 9.*





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### Building Early Childhood Programs, *continued from page 8.*

different from those commonly used in K-12 schools. (Sara Mead, *U.S. News and World Report*, April 9, 2015)

Building early childhood programs for ALL children requires funding creativity and partnerships, culturally relevant programs and services, teachers who understand the unique learning needs of preschool learners and a partnership with their caregivers. It is a big job, but I believe it is one of the most important instructional strategies we can use for student success — and is not optional!

### Stay Connected to MASA!



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Gary's Blog: Voice of MN Education

### A Year as President, *continued from page 1.*

**2. Our membership and voice matters. Membership in MASA is important.** As I've learned this year, MASA members are asked to serve on committees and task forces to provide information and ideas to assist with state direction. I also have seen the strength of our voice in moving the agenda for public education forward in our state.

**1. MASA is the leading voice for public education.** We work together with other educational associations to provide a strong message of support for schools. We represent the students of Minnesota, and we work hard to assure those students have the best education we can provide. MASA provides all of us the opportunity to learn and work together to be strong advocates for all students.

Thank you to all MASA members for all you do to keep our foundation of public education robust. We all need to keep working together to make the difference for every student. Thank you for the opportunity to learn and work with you.

Due to the pending 2014-2015 Special Legislative session, we will be delivering your Capitol Report from Valerie Dosland, MASA lobbyist, electronically.

# Summertime and Outwit the Learning Gap

*Research shows that the learning gap among students grows during the summer season when kids are out of school, and not during the academic year*

by Shari Prest, InvestMN

### True or False?

1. Over the summer months, students forget some of what they have learned in school.
2. Students score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer than they did at the end of the previous spring.
3. Cooking, budgeting, gardening, food shopping, household maintenance, travel, outings, etc., do not contribute to summer learning.
4. Students lose approximately 2.6 months of grade level equivalency in math over the summer months each year.
5. Children from lower income families experience an average loss in reading skills over the summer months.
6. If children read “high interest, ability-appropriate” books during the summer, their reading skills can actually grow.
7. Key studies indicate that achievement gaps between high and low performing students grow over the summer, but not during the school year.
8. Children from all backgrounds learn at similar rates during the school year, but each summer students of high socioeconomic status continue to learn while those of low socioeconomic status fall behind.
9. There is nothing parents or communities can do to eliminate or reduce learning loss.
6. **True.** If children read “high interest, ability-appropriate” books during the summer, their reading skills can grow as much as their peers who attended summer school (James Kim, Harvard University).
7. **True.** Two-thirds of the academic achievement gap in reading and language found among high school students has been explained through the learning loss that occurs during the summer months of the primary school years (Diane Grazer, education consultant, Wyoming Department of Education and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer\\_learning\\_loss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_learning_loss) - cite\_ref-1 Entwisle, D., Alexander, K., & Olson, L. 2000).
8. **True.** Multiple studies have found the summer learning loss varies by income and race, and its impact persists even past childhood (Barbara Heyns, New York University, Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., Olson, L, Johns Hopkins University).
9. **False.** Something as simple as providing books and encouragement has been shown to develop reading skills. St. Paul Schools has created a good resource for suggestions and guidelines at <http://sprocketssaintpaul.org/news-and-media/do-summer-countdown>. Create a “scavenger hunt” of idioms, or articles, or ways to save energy.

### And the answers are...

1. **True.** Over the summer months, students are likely to forget up to 2.6 months of what they learned the previous academic year (Cooper, 1996).
2. **True.** Except for reading scores for middle class students, scores are lower in the fall than they were in the previous spring (Cooper, H., Nye, B. K., Lindsay, J., & S. 1996).
3. **False.** These are learning experiences that can develop reading, reasoning, math, problem solving, planning, and other skills.
4. **True.** Math learning loss crosses all populations of kids (Harris Cooper, 1996).
5. **True.** Low-income students generally lose about two months of reading achievement. Middle-income students experience slight gains in reading performances (MetaMetrics).

### What can you do?

Some of us think of summer as a time to let go of schedules, abandon bed times, sleep in, or camp out. Older students may use it as a time to get a job and earn a little extra money for added independence in the months ahead. Still others see it as a time to watch TV, play video games, follow celebrities on Twitter and Nap. However it is spent, summer has long been considered a part of our Minnesota culture—almost an annual rite of passage.

Unfortunately, summer is also something else. Summer is a time of learning loss for students. As much as one-third of what was learned during the previous academic year in school is lost. The loss is greatest for those who are not involved in a variety of experiences. Those experiences don't need to be expensive or even have a cost at all.

Research shows that the learning gap among students grows during the summer season when kids are out of school, and not during the academic year. The most information and understanding is lost in Math skills. This is good information

Summertime *continued on page 13.*

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## TECHNOLOGY

# 8 Great Ways to Jumpstart Your Google+ /Twitter PLN

*Two social media savants share how to build the right social PLN for your needs*

Posted by Stephen Noonoo  
www.eschoolnews.com

Twitter and Google+ may not have been designed for educators, but every day thousands of teachers, school leaders, and learners of all sizes take to social media to connect, grow, and share in ways that would seem almost impossible a few short years ago. With all the noise, though, it can be tough to know where to begin.

The biggest benefit is that social media helps break down traditional geography-based professional development and exposes educators to outside ideas, says Thomas Murray, a director at the Alliance For Excellent Education, co-founder of Twitter's #edtechchat, and new author of *Leading Professional Learning*. "It helps you keep up with the latest trends and hot topics, and it keeps you on the cusp of what education is looking like."

Recently, Murray and Steven Anderson (@web20classroom), a former director of instructional technology in North Carolina and co-author of *The Relevant Educator*, shared their best tips for making the most of social sites like Google+ and Twitter to grow and learn in the age of the truly global PLN (personal learning network).

### 1. Start with what (and who) you know.

It's fine to begin building your network with friends and colleagues, Anderson says, because it will naturally branch out as you get more comfortable. He also recommends starting to build a PLN based on your own passions. If you're interested in project-based learning, try a #PBLchat; if you're a tech director, look for others who share your job title. "Don't feel like you have to go into every community," Anderson says. "Find one place where you can learn and that will provide the most value to your learning in the shortest amount of time spent."

### 2. Find chats that are right for you.

These days there are Twitter chats on virtually every topic for every time zone—from #4thchat, a chat specific to fourth grade teachers to #makerED, a discussion group centered around the burgeoning maker movement—so finding an interesting one shouldn't be a problem. To make the search even easier, Murray and his PLN connected with one of the brains behind Google Apps who helped them create a comprehensive, Google-fied spreadsheet, which lets you see the often 30+ chats a day at a glance and switch between

time zones. "It gives you perspective on how much is going on in the education world, the dedication involved, and the conversations taking place," Murray says.

### 3. Take time to get the hang of it.

Murray says that educators rarely jump in feet first and become overnight power users. Instead, they usually follow a three-step process. "I call it lurk, learn, lead," he says. "First people lurk. They get setup with something like Twitter, at a professional learning day or with a friend, and they're in that 'What's in it for me?' mentality. What happens is they start to learn: they see people sharing resources and people that are doing things in their classroom that they can use. If I'm on Twitter, I can connect with people all over the world." Finally, he says, some begin to assume leadership roles, from moderating chats to showing new users the ropes.

### 4. Google+ is great for educators. Really.

While it was never in any danger of replacing Facebook for most people, Google+ has found a second life among educators who use the site to create multiple PLNs where they can engage in richer conversations and also filter their posts by circles. Part of that is because Google is already such a big part of the fabric of ed tech, Anderson says. Another reason? "It's an extension of something educators are already doing. For very few people, I believe, it's an exclusive place they're going, but it's this kind of add-on social network to something else. They're already on Twitter, having those conversation and starting those threads, and then they're going into more depth on Google+."

### 5. Find conversations by searching hashtags.

It's not just Twitter users that benefit from an intentional hashtag search. Google+ uses the feature, too, often reusing the same hashtags, such as #edchat, which helps new users cut through some of the noise. "Hashtags will expose you to lots of great people who are equally as valuable, or could be more valuable, than the people with huge followings," Anderson says.

### 6. Dive deeper than 140 characters.

Social media is a great place to make lasting friendships that translate from the digital to the real world at places like conferences, Murray says. To bridge the gap between

*Technology continued on page 13.*



online and face-to-face communication, Murray says that many educators are flocking to Google Hangouts and Voxer, an app that lets users leave voicemail-like messages for a group asynchronously or voice chat in real time like a walkie-talkie. “In a Twitter chat your conversation is limited to 140 characters at a time,” he says. “What people are starting to do is pair Twitter with another tool that allows them to go deeper with a much smaller audience.”

### 7. Make the time, if you don't already have it.

According to Murray, spending time growing and interacting with your PLN pays off in the long run. “Often people will say to me, ‘I don't have the time for social media,’ and I respond, ‘You don't have the time not to do it,’” Murray says. “Personalized professional learning and staying on top of the latest trends and resources is really something that will help you be a top-notch educator. That availability for anytime-anywhere PD is at your fingertips.”

### 8. Model global learning for students

Collaboration, global learning, and analyzing different points of view are tentpoles of 21st century learning. Participating in truly global PLNs helps educators walk the walk as far as students are concerned, Anderson says. “For my students, it shows that learning doesn't just happen in the isolation of me but it happens with other people and that there are a lot of people out there who have a lot of things to share. I say this all the time: alone we're smart but together we're brilliant. Imagine the problems we could solve if we all band together and learn from each other. That's what my PLN does for me on a daily basis.”

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to have because it means families and communities and schools can all be a part of eliminating the learning gap. We can target summer as a time to hold learning expectations and to add experiences. Some ideas include:

- ▶ Students, ask teachers to send home math problems for you to do over the summer and ask the teachers if they will either send a separate answer sheet with explanations or will go over the answers with you in the fall.
- ▶ Count, measure, weigh, estimate, solve problems daily.
- ▶ Walk, bike or drive to the library weekly. Spend some time exploring the library. Read a little about places in the world, or artists, or something that interests you personally. Ask the librarian to suggest good reading material to bring home. At some libraries, you can even check out paintings to hang on your wall for a time. Learn about the life of the artist or just see what you notice about the painting — its colors, shapes, story.
- ▶ Read, read, read, together or with others.
- ▶ Each week, write a story about some person you come across. The story can be real or made up. Read it to someone. Use at least a couple of words you haven't used before.
- ▶ Use scraps at home to create a model of your dream work place or home.
- ▶ Create a healthy meal from food to which you have access. Research and design a \$5 meal that is both healthy and tasty. Learn about proteins, sugars, salts and what they can do to your body and how they can be reduced in the foods you eat. Or try a meal that is all fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Listen to a type of music you have not listened to before. Make instruments of things you have around the house and produce a song.



## Twitter Chat for MASA Members

#MNMASA Second Sunday of the Month @ 8 pm

Many of our current members have discovered the power of Twitter Chats through #mnlead, #edtech, #iaedchat and many others. Each of these chats allows participants to share their experiences while also learning from the experiences shared by participating colleagues. #MNMASA will provide our members with opportunities to engage and learn from others in district leadership about the experiences being realized.

Our discussions take place the second Sunday of the month at 8:00 pm. Chats are facilitated by Bill Adams, Superintendent at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton (@JWPBulldog) and Teri Preisler, Superintendent at Tri-City United (@TPreisler). Topics will be developed for each week's conversation with future topics coming from those participating in the chats.

Please let us know whether you are interested — go to <https://sites.google.com/site/mnmasatwitterchat> and click on the Twitter Chat Form tab. For details, please click on the “How To” tab at the above address.

# Determining the Appropriate Setting for Early Childhood Special Education



Charles E. Long  
Education Law Attorney  
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

A major challenge for school districts in the provision of early childhood special education services is meeting their obligation to offer services in the child's natural environment (infants and toddlers) or least restrictive environment (preschool). Particularly for districts that do not operate their own child care centers or preschools, determining the appropriate setting and coordinating service delivery can be difficult. This article will discuss the responsibilities school districts have and the options available to them.

## The Natural Environment for Infants and Toddlers

Eligible children with disabilities starting at birth through two years of age are entitled to special education and related services under Part C of the IDEA. Part C requires that these early intervention services be provided in "natural environments" to the maximum extent appropriate. 34 C.F.R. § 303.126. "Natural environments" are "settings that are natural or typical for a same-aged infant or toddler without a disability, [and] may include the home or community settings..." 34 C.F.R. § 303.26. "Community settings" are those settings "where children without disabilities typically are found" and include settings such as child care and family day care centers, nursery schools, early childhood centers, community centers and even libraries, grocery stores, parks and restaurants. *Letter to Johnson*, 113 LRP 24301 (OSEP 2013). The underlying goal is to "ensure that infants and toddlers with disabilities have the opportunity to interact on a regular basis with typically developing children." *Id.*

Because Part C services are individualized to the specific needs of the child and the child's family, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has noted that "no one setting is appropriate for all services for all infants and toddlers." *Letter to Morris*, 44 IDELR 97 (OSEP 2005). As a general principle, providing early intervention services "in a group setting limited exclusively to infants and toddlers with disabilities would not constitute a natural environment." *Id.* Services may occur in settings other than the natural environments only when early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily for the infant or toddler in a natural environment. In such cases, early intervention must be provided in the setting

"that is most appropriate, as determined by the parent and the individualized family service plan [IFSP] team." *Id.* Upon such a determination, the team must include a statement in the IFSP justifying providing services outside of the natural environment based upon the child's individual outcomes.

## The Least Restrictive Environment for Preschoolers


When disabled children enter preschool and transition from Part C to Part B of the IDEA, school districts must ensure that special education and related services are provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This is the same LRE standard that applies to disabled students enrolled in primary or secondary schools and establishes a "strong preference" for educating disabled students in regular education classes alongside nondisabled peers. *Dear Colleague Letter*, 58 IDELR 290 (OSEP 2012). OSEP defines the term regular education classes as including "a preschool setting with typically developing peers." *Id.*

*When disabled children enter preschool and transition from Part C to Part B of the IDEA, school districts must ensure that special education and related services are provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE)...This does not mean, however, that school districts must establish their own preschools...*

This does not mean, however, that school districts must establish their own preschools in order to satisfy the LRE requirement. School districts without public preschool programs "must explore alternative methods." This may include providing services at other public preschool programs such as Head Start or community based child care, at private preschool programs attended by nondisabled children, in classes for disabled preschool students in other public elementary schools, or through home-based services. *Id.*

As with school-aged children, the placement determination must be made by the preschool child's IEP team and be based upon the child's individual needs. Placing the child in special classes, separate schools or otherwise removing the child from the regular education setting may only occur when the nature and severity of the child's disability prevents the child from being appropriately educated in regular classes despite the use of supplementary aids and services.

Legal Issues *continued on page 22.*



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# ‘Caffeinated Learning’

*Changing how we do professional development*



Anne M. Beninghof  
anne@ideasforeducators.com

I pulled my first all-nighter my freshman year of college. My roommate and I had both been assigned to Mr. Seager’s 8 a.m. Chemistry class. Mr. Seager was a science whiz, passionate and knowledgeable about his topic, but a lousy teacher. After dozing through many of his uninspired early-morning lectures, we had fallen way behind in our understanding of the content and knew we had to stay up all night and cram.

Thank goodness for the 24-hour coffee shop on the corner. A quick trek from our dorm, and within minutes we were back to our studies with two mega-cups of coffee. My first sip was tentative. I added sugar and cream to smooth out the flavor. A few gulps later and the buzz was palpable! The words on the page began to make sense, connections jumped out at me, and our conversation was rich with comprehension.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if caffeinated learning were delivered upfront by the teacher instead? What if teachers, instructors, professors, presenters—all those who facilitated adult learning experiences—infused a jolt of caffeine into their instructional design and delivery? Imagine a room full of awake and engaged adults, interacting with new content in meaningful ways, ready to return to work with the necessary knowledge and skills for successful application.

Recently, I attended a national education conference with dozens of sessions to choose from each day. I was excited to plan out my agenda and learn from the best in the field. By the end of three days I was sorely disappointed. The sessions were mostly lecture—experts talking and referring to unreadable slides. Unfortunately, my experience is not uncommon. I hear frequently from friends and colleagues about training classes in which they struggled to stay awake as the presenter lectured at them about the latest buzzword in their field.

How can we change the state of professional learning activities in education? I asked a group of teachers to share what works (other than coffee) and what doesn’t work to keep them awake and engaged in a workshop or training. Based on this conversation, I developed a Presenter’s Agreement. It includes a list of minimal expectations for a class or workshop lasting longer than 30 minutes. It is a work in progress—not definitive, but a starting place for conversation with anyone you may hire to facilitate a professional learning session.

### Presenter’s Agreement

1. Near the beginning of the session, please ask participants to greet someone seated near them. This sets the tone for an interactive experience.
2. Use visuals—including photos, videos, and infographics—to emphasize your content and maintain attention.
3. Keep bullet points on a slide to three or fewer, with no more than five words each. Make sure the slides are legible from a distance.
4. Do not face your slides and read from them. Instead, enhance the bullet points with additional information.
5. If there is a microphone, please use it. Learning needs to be accessible to all, even those who are hard of hearing.
6. Embed interaction every 20 minutes (minimum) so that participants have a chance to talk or apply their learning.
7. Honor the experience in the room by asking participants to contribute, share ideas, and teach one another.
8. If the session is longer than 45 minutes, be sure to vary the interaction. Discussion, reflection, games, role-play, cooperative learning, video viewing, demonstrations, readings, case studies—they all have value.

Organizations such as Learning Forward, the National Speakers Association and the Association for Talent Development are making great strides in setting high standards for professional learning. But, imagine if this list of expectations were a part of every agreement signed with a speaker. Imagine administrators discussing these expectations when they phoned a consultant. Imagine if this list were disseminated to presenters prior to every large conference. Imagine how these minimal expectations, when met, would begin to change the nature of professional learning!

Anne Beninghof has a home in Colorado but travels the world providing presentations and facilitating learning. Her mission is to improve learning by eradicating boring, ineffective teaching. Anne’s interactive, creative style is captured in the teaching ideas on her website, [www.ideasforeducators.com](http://www.ideasforeducators.com) and in her newest book, *Caffeinated Learning: How to Design and Conduct Rich, Robust Professional Learning*. Check it out at [www.caffeinatedlearning.com](http://www.caffeinatedlearning.com).





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## Are You Moving?

Summer is the time of year when many of our members are on the move. Help us keep track of you (and keep your MASA benefits and services coming to you). Please give Deb a call (651/645-6272 or 866/444-5251), send her a fax (651/645-7518), or send an email to [members@mnasa.org](mailto:members@mnasa.org) to update your records. 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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# Members Minnevate

## Leading the Reinvention of Education

### Identify ways to advocate a common agenda:

#### *'I pledge to Minnevate!'*

(2015-2017 MASA Strategic Vision Action Plan)

**A**dvocating a “common agenda” in education is a tall order, but the MASA Strategic Plan points us in that direction, and uses MASA’s Minnevate! initiative intentionally as a call to action.

About a year ago, MASA was traveling throughout the state, convening the discussion groups that gave us our first Minnevate! data set. We know that Minnesota needs to innovate, and school administrators are under increasing pressure to reinvent education. Through Minnevate!, we hope to facilitate learning opportunities and a dialogue process that yields an action agenda for Minnesota school administrators, legislative leaders, business leaders, and other key members of the communities we serve. In each issue of this newsletter, we will bring forward some aspect of the Minnevate! dialogue, for your reflection and sharing. Remember to visit the Minnevate! web site (<http://minnevate.mnasa.org>) and to add your voice to this important conversation. In this newsletter, we will revisit the conversation around vision.

### What is our boldest vision for positive education futures in Minnesota?

Minnevate! participants reported that **new assessment measures** are desired that assess capacity for growth and learning while continuing accountability. New standards are needed that perhaps resemble Minnesota’s former Profiles of Learning. “Assessment” does not necessarily mean “test,” and formative measures are needed for teachers to determine student learning. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores can serve as milestones until a better evaluation process can assess students’ creativity and innovation skills. In regard to school assessment, one group asked, how can we work cooperatively vs. competitively when Minnesota schools are compared vis-à-vis school report cards?

The promotion of **soft skills development** (i.e., critical thinking, life skills, teamwork, character development, communication, and emotional intelligence) emerged in contrast to the drilling of standards. The world (including parenting) has changed, and learning also takes place outside of the classroom— perhaps even more so beyond school than within it. Students need to be taught how to learn, not what to learn. We need a better balance in requirements for academic and soft skills, and project-based learning and collaborations with our communities may help schools achieve this.

Students learn differently, and **personalized/individualized learning and differentiated learning** options can help each student maximize his or her full potential by focusing on plans based on skills needed. In a customized learning environment, students could keep track of the standards that they master, and compile a passport of knowledge and skills that can be carried over to post-secondary studies or their careers. This move away from universal, standards-based instruction would free up teachers to learn more about their students and passions and enable them to better serve as guides and consultants for students’ success. Such a movement toward holistic personal growth may help to separate educational success from economic indicators.

An **engaged community** can help bridge the gap between “them” and “us.” There is a notion that schools are different from the communities we serve, and we need to create bridges with our communities to change mindsets and build support for schools. Collaborations need to include those who do not have children in schools as well as institutions that support the needs of learners: housing, social, religious, cultural, businesses, and families, among others. We have opportunities to engage at conferences, open houses, concerts, and other events where community members interface with schools. Small, rural communities can collaborate to keep their brightest youth to sustain agricultural opportunities. An education that is inclusive and embraces community assets can help blur the lines between secondary and post-secondary education.

Educator training has not changed in recent years, but the roles of teachers and administrators are changing. We need **new professional development** options to train and support teachers and leaders for 21st century schools. Just as students need personalized training, teachers should have personalized training in how to guide students through their own processes of personalized learning. Time for professional development is currently limited, and we should make time to provide for it in our schools.

Participants expressed a desire to **reform compliance standards and accountability measures** from one that is focused on compliance toward one that is focused on engagement. We should embrace competency-based learning, and fund mechanisms to support increased growth models. We can see great growth in all buildings, and our school boards could come back to us and say, “you really set expectations high — how will you grow next year?” And, at the end of the year, we have to build from those numbers regardless of the

*Minnevate continued on page 22.*

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## Election Results



Scott Thielman  
President-Elect  
Superintendent  
Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose  
Schools

**C**ongratulations to the following candidates who have been elected to MASA leadership positions. Board representatives are elected in a general election by the MASA members and will serve a three-year term beginning July 1, 2015.

**President:** Jeff Ronneberg, Superintendent, Spring Lake Park Schools (president-elect in 2014-15 and will assume office as MASA president)

**President-Elect:** Scott Thielman, Superintendent, Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools

### Board Members:

**Region 6 Superintendent Representative:** Scott Staska, Superintendent, Rocori Public Schools

**Greater MN Special Education Representative:** Reggie Engebretson, Executive Director, Northland Special Education Coop

**Region 8 Superintendent Representative:** Gregg Allen, Superintendent, Mesabi East School District

**Region 9 Superintendent Representatives:** Connie Hayes, Superintendent, NE Metro 916 Intermediate District; Curt Tryggestad, Superintendent, Eden Prairie Schools

**Metro Central Office Representative:** Wayne Kazmierczak, Director of Finance and Operations, White Bear Lake Area Schools

Newly elected leaders will participate in an 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.

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

## MASA Transitions

### Retirees

Chuck Arns, Pillager School District  
Robert Belluzzo, Hibbing School District  
Robert Cavanna, Resource Training & Solutions  
Ed Crawford, Duluth School District  
Gary Fisher, Luverne School District  
Brian Grenell, Madelia School District  
Sue Ann Gruver, Prior Lake-Savage School District  
Gerald Hanson, Milaca School District  
Richard Hanson, Le Sueur-Henderson School District  
Jerry Kjergaard, Willmar School District  
Bruce Klaehn, Dover-Eyota School District  
Vern Koepp, Rush City School District  
Jonathan Miller, Big Lake School District  
Tom Nelson, Stillwater School District  
Patty Phillips, N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District  
Charles Rick, Watertown-Mayer School District  
Jill Skarvold, Farmington School District  
John Thein, Roseville School District  
Douglas Tomhave, South St. Paul School District  
John Varner, Onamia School District

*Thank you for your service to education and congratulations on your retirement!*

### District Changes

Mark Adams, Greenway-Nashwauk-Keewatin to Greenway School District  
Tom Ames, Truman now sharing with Madelia  
Gary Anger, Rosemont-Apple Valley-Eagan principal to Zumbrota-Mazeppa School District  
Michael Carolan, Wisconsin to Dover-Eyota School District  
Virginia Dahlstrom, retired superintendent to Truman School District  
Teresa Dupre, Frankfurt to Rush City School District  
Brian Gersich, Mankato to Le Sueur-Henderson School District  
Michael Goar, interim, Minneapolis School District  
Evan Hanson, Fisher Schools  
Jeffrey Holm, North Dakota to Willmar  
Brad Johnson, Hermantown to Hibbing School District  
Melissa Jordan, Elk River to NW Suburban Integration 6078  
Rick Lahn, Nashwauk-Keewatin to Morris School District  
Mike Malmburg, Elk River to Pillager School District

Transitions continued on page 22.



# Nominations Open for 2016 Superintendent of the Year

## Nominate a colleague for the nation's most prestigious award for school system leaders.

MASA invites nominations for 2016 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year. The recipient of this prestigious award will be a candidate among other state winners for National superintendent of the Year. The 2016 National Superintendent of the Year will be announced at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) National Conference on Education in Phoenix, Arizona, Feb. 11-13, 2016.

Now in its 29th year, the AASA National Superintendent of the Year Program pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead our nation's public schools. The program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents. Any superintendent, chancellor or top leader of a school system in Minnesota who plans to continue in the profession may be nominated.

### Candidates are assessed on the following criteria.

- ▶ **Leadership for Learning:** creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.

- ▶ **Communication:** strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- ▶ **Professionalism:** constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- ▶ **Community Involvement:** active participation in local community activities and an understanding of regional, national and international issues.

The MN Superintendent of the Year honor is graciously sponsored by ATS&R, Planners/Architects/Engineers. Recent recipients include: 2015 Sandra Lewandowski, Intermediate District 287; 2014 Kate Maguire, Osseo Area Schools; and 2013 Jeff Olson, Saint Peter Public Schools. For a complete list of past award recipients, visit Recognition on the MASA web ([www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org))

**Nominations are due Aug. 1, 2015.** For more information, please contact [quinn@mnasa.org](mailto:quinn@mnasa.org). The process is completely online. To place a nomination, visit the ASASA web: <http://soy.aasa.org>.

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work we do. We need to move away from the huge “spider web” of state testing. Standards-based learning can become a byproduct of an improved accountability model.

Many Minnevate! participants expressed a bold vision where students are **responsible for their own education**. We need to change the attitude in school from rules and consequences to a formula where we can help students learn and grow from choices. And, we need to develop independent learners who can advocate for what they need to know, how they learn best, and what they need for support in their learning. Students can be ignited to pursue their passions and be highly engaged in their own learning. This requires greater teacher preparation for environments where students serve as (co-)leaders in their own learning.

**Adequate funding** leads to positive education futures in Minnesota, where financial resources may be mobilized to support accomplishing our visions: More personnel, less employee burnout, more resources devoted toward developing creative teachers, and resources to provide each student with an individual learning plan. At a basic level, we still need to provide funds to eliminate obstacles such as transportation. And, a “quality education” needs to be defined versus an “adequate education.”

We need a **better transition to higher education**. There has been a noticeable deterioration of the quality of students entering college. Whereas university learning used to be centered on discussion, students are now disengaged from the conversation and look for new ways to learn. Are we preparing students who are prepared for college after high school, or are we pressuring students into higher education? Can we build better congruence between secondary and post-secondary education? Do we want to continue to hold students in high schools until they are 18 if they show that they are ready for college at an earlier age?

In a culture of **high expectations**, our definition of success changes when we eliminate policy that supports meeting minimum goals. All kids should have the skills to continue learning and being successful in the paths they choose. This requires high expectations for students and staff, and provides opportunities for deep connections with our communities. Just as we helped to level the playing field for all Minnesota kids with all-day, everyday kindergarten, we can provide greater opportunity through one-to-one technology initiatives.

Schools that are **involved with parents** bring families into the planning and direction of learning, connecting and moving beyond school walls. This should start earlier (pre-K), and incorporate families from all demographic profiles: socioeconomic status, culture, race, etc.

**What do you think?** Tell us at <http://minnevate.mnasa.org>

**Mike McNulty**, Lester Prairie School District to Aspen Academy  
**Jim Muckenhirn**, North Dakota to South Koochiching-Rainy River School District

**Paul Neubauer**, St. Francis to Foley School District

**Lance Northey**, Fisher to Nashwauk-Keewatin School District

**Craig Ofstedahl**, Warroad to Luverne School District

**Christine Osario**, St. Paul to N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale

**Denise Pontrelli**, Spring Lake Park to Stillwater School District

**Jeremy Schmidt**, principal to superintendent, Lester Prairie School District

**Mark Schmitz**, Staples-Motley School District to Resource Training

**Christopher Schulz**, principal to superintendent, Pine Point School District

**Aldo Sicoli**, Robbinsdale to Roseville School District

**Teri Staloch**, Osseo to Prior Lake-Savage School District

**Amy Starzecky**, Floodwood to Duluth

**Bert Strassburg**, Inver Grove Heights to Onamia School District

**Darrin Stroshal**, Foley School District to St. Cloud Tech College

**Chris Swenson**, North Dakota to Holdingford School District

**Tim Truebenbach**, Cambridge to Milaca School District

**Steve Westerberg**, Iowa to Big Lake School District

**Ron Wilke**, La Crescent-Hokah to Watertown/Mayer School District

**Eric Williams**, Holdingford School District to Nova Academy

*Congratulations on your new position!*

## Conclusion

Whether it be infants and toddlers under Part C or preschoolers under Part B, school districts must ensure that early intervention services are provided to disabled students in settings that enable them to be with their nondisabled peers. This may require a certain amount of flexibility and a willingness to consider a variety of alternatives. By maintaining focus on the child’s individualized needs and following the proper team process, school districts can satisfy these obligations.

This article is intended to provide general information with commentary. It should not be relied upon as legal advice. If required, legal advice regarding this topic should be obtained from district legal counsel.

Charles E. Long is an education law attorney with the law firm of Kennedy & Graven, Chartered. For more information, please contact him at (612) 337-9300 or [www.kennedy-graven.com](http://www.kennedy-graven.com).

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# MASA Calendar of Events

## 2015

### June 18-19

MASA Board of Directors  
Retreat  
The Depot, Minneapolis

### August 4-5

MDE Back-to-School  
Conference  
Minneapolis Marriott NW,  
Brooklyn Park

### September 7

MASA offices closed  
Labor Day Holiday

### September 26

MASA Board of Directors  
DECC, Duluth

### September 27

MASA Board of Directors  
MASA Great Start Cohort  
DECC, Duluth

### September 27-29

MASA Fall Conference  
DECC, Duluth

### October 5 or 6

Annual School Law Seminar  
Minneapolis

### November 18-20

CLM Fall Conference  
Cragun's, Brainerd

### November 26-27

MASA offices closed  
Thanksgiving Holiday

### December 24-25

MASA offices closed  
Winter Holiday

## 2016

### January 1

MASA offices closed  
Winter Holiday

### February 11-13

AASA National Conference  
on Education  
Phoenix Convention Center,  
Phoenix, AZ

### March 9

MASA Board of Directors  
MASA Great Start Cohort V  
Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

### March 10-11

MASA/MASE Spring  
Conference  
Brooklyn Center

### March 25

MASA offices closed  
Spring Holiday

### May 30

MASA offices closed  
Memorial Day Holiday



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