

Mark Robertson is 2008 MN Superintendent of the Year

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Mr. Mark Robertson, Superintendent for the Fridley Schools, the 2008 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

As the Minnesota honoree, Mark is a candidate among other state winners for National Superintendent of the Year, to be announced at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) convention on February 15, 2008 in Tampa, Florida.

Superintendent of the Year nominees are evaluated on how each candidate demonstrates:

- Leadership for learning—creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication skills—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 understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Mark was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. “Mark Robertson is truly an exemplary leader,” says MASA Executive Director Dr. Charles Kyte. “He is a skilled collaborative leader who knows how to help his district community envision positive change and chart a course for achievement. We are proud to have Mark represent Minnesota’s superintendents as Superintendent of the Year.”

Mark has been superintendent for the Fridley Schools since 2003. With an enrollment of 2,750 students, Fridley is a second-tier suburban school district located ten miles north of downtown Minneapolis. The district’s student population is slowly declining as area residents tend to stay in the vicinity after their children graduate. (82% of district homeowners do not have children in school.)

However, 23% of the student population comprises non-resident or open-enrolled students from surrounding districts. Student demographics have changed drastically in the past ten years, with a growth in the percentage of students of color from 10% to 37%, an increase of English Language Learners from 2% to 12%, and growth in the number of students financially eligible to receive free or reduced lunch from 23% to 46%.



Mark Robertson

During Mark’s tenure, the district has refocused its mission to reflect a new motto of “Fridley Schools, A World-Class Community of Learners,” resonating both a global perspective to education and the diversity of the student population. At the core of the vision is the goal of becoming the first Minnesota school district to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) continuum from kindergarten through high school, in which all students will be expected to succeed at the high standard levels required by the IB program.

The Fridley School Board nominated Mark for the Superintendent of the Year Award. “Mark Robertson is a progressive thinker, a persuasive leader, and an effective 2008 MN Superintendent of the Year...Continued on Page 3

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LEADER'S *notes*

Promoting the Common Good



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

Just as the sun was coming up, Stuart saw a man seated in thought by the side of the road. Stuart steered his car alongside, stopped, and put his head out. "You're worried about something, aren't you?" asked Stuart.

Tom Westerhaus

"Yes, I am," said the man, who was tall and mild.

"Can I help in any way?" asked Stuart in a friendly voice.

The man shook his head. "It's an impossible situation, I guess," he replied. "You see, I'm the Superintendent of Schools in this town."

"That's not an impossible situation," said Stuart. "It's bad, but it's not impossible."

(from Stuart Little, by E.B. White, 1945)

I'm guessing many Minnesota superintendents felt like the man on the side of the road this fall, trying to peddle new taxes to local voters in the face of a weakened economy, record home foreclosures, an anti-tax campaign, and an NCLB-induced message of public school failure. While some districts found success at the polls, many did not. Won or lost, the beleaguered superintendent on the roadside felt all too real.

After 20 years in the superintendency, I, too, count myself as one who struggled with a strange election in November, one that found me recalling Casey Stengel's warning to "keep the six guys who hate your guts from talking to the six guys who haven't made up their minds about you!"

The negative election in my district wasn't so much about a defeated referendum as it was about a disgruntled terminated employee who ran for school board and won. Because we had properly and progressively disciplined him, and because of the nature of his insubordination, I made a decision to not return to work under him on the school board when my contract expires at the end of this year.

There was nothing heroic in my decision to leave, just a sense that sometimes leaders need to draw a line in the sand over what we will endure in our work. Knowing when to walk away from a bad situation, unfortunately, might well be our

strongest leadership statement.

Juxtaposed during our divisive election were emails of hope coming from my son, Mike, a second year resident doctor doing part of his residency in Rwanda. On the Sunday before Election Day, he sent me an email about a new word he learned, **umaganga**.

"The final Saturday of each month in Rwanda is a distinctly different kind of day. Few vehicles are found on the roads. Even pedestrian traffic is noticeably down. There are no bustling markets. Instead, you find clusters of Rwandans shoveling, hoeing, or mixing cement. It is **umaganga**-civic work day. On that day, each community comes together and decides upon something they want to improve in their community. Bridges are built, sanitation improved, trenches dug to divert heavy rains from eroding the roads, fields tilled, and community structures improved. Not one is allowed on the roads - police will ticket you if you decide to disavow this rule. But that doesn't seem to be an issue. Rwandans embrace and enjoy the fact that time is specifically set aside to invest in their communities. This spirit is all about the common good and people are happy to be a part of it."

Even after the turmoil of a contentious election season, we can't help but feel grateful for and happy to be a part of working for the common good in our school district leadership role in each of our respective communities. I truly do feel that way even now in my own Prior Lake-Savage Area School District. Paul Houston of AASA has said,

"Leadership is not about personal glory or fame. It is not about power and control. It is about taking people where they didn't know they needed to go. It is about taking individuals and teaching them to work together...It is about loving them and leading them."

Thank you for the hard work you do each and every day in your role as a superintendent or other district leader. Thank you for your efforts to pass referenda and balance budgets and work with school boards. Thank you for taking a stand and drawing a line in the sand when necessary. Thank you for your many words of encouragement and support for me upon making a decision to leave my district. And thank you for your umaganga...your daily efforts to promote the common good and teach others how to work together for the betterment of all. I am proud to call you colleagues. •

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

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2008 MN Superintendent of the Year ... Continued from Page 1

manager,” says Fridley School Board Chair Kim Sampson. “As Superintendent of the Year, he will be an excellent spokesperson for education and an excellent example to others of the diverse skills and knowledge required to be an effective transformational leader in this field today.”

Mark is especially noted for innovative leadership, finding creative means of improving the district and accomplishing goals. He has secured significant financial support for district initiatives through grants. He has expanded corporate partnerships, community mentors, after school programs, and community-based opportunities to maximize opportunities for students. In the past two years, both of Fridley’s elementary schools have been named Minnesota Schools of Excellence, an honor typically given to fewer than six schools statewide each year. Last year, Fridley Middle School received recognition as one of the top magnet schools in the United States, and Fridley High School was one of four schools selected to participate in the Minnesota Department of Education’s initiative, “Systemic High School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model.”

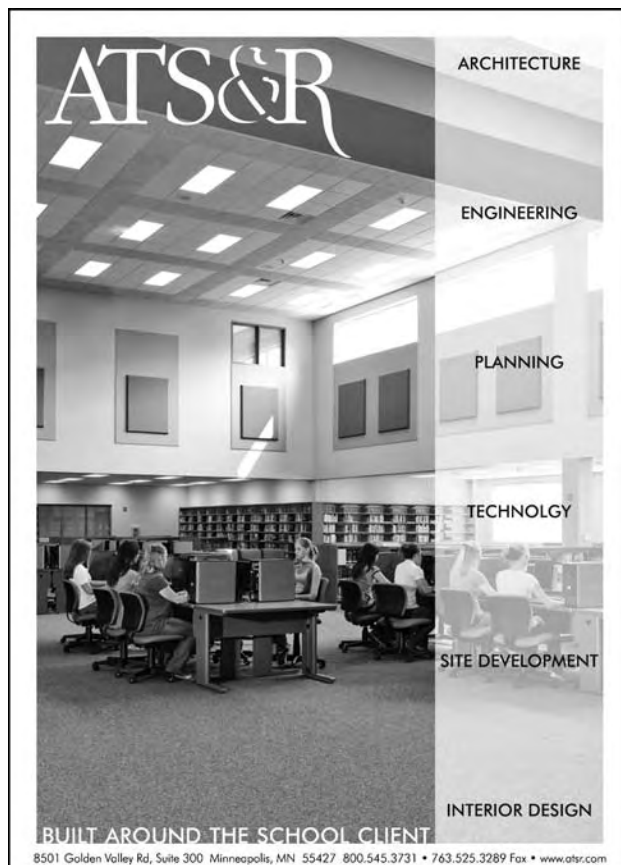
A statewide leader, Mark was one of twenty-six superintendents serving on the Minnesota Superintendent Symposium, the result of which was a significant document defining the traits of a world-class school system that prepares all students for success in the Global Information Age. He is a key leader in the Northwest Suburban Integration School District, a collaborative that supports the effectiveness of integration programs. He serves in a number of leadership roles for civic groups and professional associations.

Mark received his superintendent licensure from the University of Minnesota, and he holds specialist and master’s degrees from the University of St.

Thomas, and a bachelor’s degree from Bethel University. He is an adjunct professor in leadership and curriculum for Bethel University’s doctoral program and St. Mary’s University’s master’s program. Before becoming Superintendent for the Fridley Schools, he was a high school principal in Forest Lake, MN, and an associate principal in Blaine, MN.

MASA is a professional organization whose mission is to establish the statewide agenda for children, serve as the preeminent voice for public education, and empower members through quality services and support. MASA members are school superintendents, directors of special education, other central office school administrators, regional administrators, and higher education administrators and professors from throughout Minnesota.

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MN's Promise—World Class Schools for A World Class State Should MN Reform Legislation for Our Education Systems?



Charlie Kyte

by **Charles Kyte**
Executive Director, MASA

About two years ago, a small group of approximately 25 school superintendents gathered in the conference room of the Minneapolis Foundation in downtown Minneapolis to hold a private discussion regarding the state of education in Minnesota. After the usual complaining, the conversation shifted to what it would take to have truly world

class schools in our state. They recognized that to drive Minnesota's economy we must successfully educate our young people.

The result of those conversations was the first edition of the "Minnesota's Promise" paper, which was distributed to our membership and many other groups a year ago. Since that time, there have been interactions with many involved citizens and education leaders. The ideas within "Minnesota's Promise" have been fine tuned and slightly expanded.

At this point, 28 associations and organizations that care about the future of our economy and the education of our children have signed on to the new "Minnesota's Promise"

document. We thank the University of Minnesota for their work in helping to pull this all together.

We are now considering the next step. MASA's Legislative Policy Committee is considering introducing the concepts within "Minnesota's Promise" to the Minnesota Legislature as a substantial piece of educational innovation legislation. The idea is to help our government and elected officials have a template we can all follow as decisions are made about education.

A similar situation occurred in 1993 the Massachusetts Education Reform Act was passed by their legislature. Over the ensuing years, through administrations of both parties and many changes in legislators, that legislation became the guide to help drive the decisions regarding their education programs and investments. The result has been that Massachusetts is excelling. Massachusetts is a state with a substantial number of children of color and poverty interspersed within the rural and metro populations. In many ways it is similar to Minnesota.

Our thought is to provide Minnesota with a template to drive its decisions over the next ten or fifteen years. We think that "Minnesota's Promise ... World Class Schools for a World Class State" is the document to help that conversation move forward. •

Harold Remme Named Chair of MSDLAF

by **Charlie Kyte**
Executive Director, MASA

Harold Remme, Superintendent of the New Ulm Schools and a trustee of the Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund (MSDLAF), has been elected Chairman of the MSDLAF Board of Trustees.

The Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund is in its 23rd year of existence and was originally formed to pool the money of school districts so the districts could earn safe but reasonable interest on their money. The fund has continued to grow over the years and as of November 2007 there is \$1,074,000,000 in the fund.

The Board of Trustees of the MSDLAF Fund consists of five school board members, three business officials and three superintendents of Minnesota schools. The other two superintendents serving on the board of trustees are Superintendents Ben Kanninen of Burnsville and Mark Bezek of Elk River.

Over the 23 years of the fund's existence, no school district

has ever lost interest or principal. The fund emphasizes security as its first objective. A second objective is liquidity in order that school districts can access their funds at any time.

There are times when the financial markets are very tumultuous. It is during those times when it is important to be willing to sacrifice a small amount of interest in order to be assured the funds invested for Minnesota schools are safe. As the managers of MSDLAF watched the sub-prime mortgage and housing market start to deteriorate last summer, they moved the investments of Minnesota schools out of the commercial paper areas and into government securities. They restricted the number of banks with which the liquid asset fund would invest, concentrating investments only with the very strongest banks.

Congratulations to Harold Remme. We know he will be a strong steward of the investments of Minnesota's schools as he guides the Board of Trustees in its decisions over the ensuing months and years. •

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The Effective Utilization of Police Liaison Officers in Responding to Student Misconduct

by **Tim Palmatier, Attorney**
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

The cooperative relationship between local law enforcement and the public schools has undoubtedly been of great benefit to building administrators who want to maintain school safety and security. However, the relationship sometimes creates double standards that can cause confusion and increase the potential for legal challenges. The prospect for legal difficulties is most apparent in the area of student discipline, where students occasionally must be questioned, searched, restrained or arrested.

Searching Students

Constitutional protections against unlawful search and seizure apply to police officers and public school officials. However, different standards apply in determining whether a school administrator or police officer may legally search a student. Generally, a decision by a school administrator to search a student must be based on “reasonable suspicion” that the student has violated some school rule and the search must be reasonable in its scope. This standard generally requires some level of individualized suspicion (and more than a hunch or feeling).¹ On the other hand, a police officer is generally required to have a higher standard of “probable cause” to search a person.²

The different standards afford school officials a little more leeway in deciding what evidence would be sufficient to conduct a search reasonable in its scope. For example, under the totality of the circumstances a school official *may* have reasonable suspicion to conduct a search of a student with prior drug offenses who appears at school with a flushed face, glassy-red eyes and an unusual or unruly affect. On the other hand, a police officer encountering such an individual in the community would, under most circumstances, not be at liberty to conduct a search.

So which standard applies to searches where the police liaison officer and school administrators are working cooperatively? In answer to this question several courts have indicated that, “a search of a student on school grounds by a school resource officer at the request of school officials should be deemed a search by a school employee . . . and thus is subject to the reasonableness standard, not the probable cause standard.”³

Seizure or Holding A Student For Questioning

Constitutional concerns can also be invoked when a

student is held for questioning. Most courts have applied the “reasonableness test” when examining whether a school official’s questioning of a student constitutes an unlawful seizure. The decisions have tended to permit more extended “involuntary” questioning of a student about school misconduct than would be permitted by a police officer acting outside of the school because “[s]tudents at school . . . have a significantly lesser expectation of privacy in regard to the temporary “seizure” of their persons than does the general population.”⁴ Courts are more likely to uphold a challenge based on the method of the detention (e.g. decision to place a student in a storage closet or have a liaison officer handcuff a student), rather than questioning the sufficiency of a district’s rationale for detaining the student.

Case law also suggests that joint questioning of a student by both school officials and a police liaison officer is entitled to a more relaxed “reasonableness standard.” Nonetheless, it is best to separate routine school investigations from police investigations. Serious criminal investigations require the work of trained law enforcement officers. Too much involvement or interference in the criminal investigation by school officials can compromise prosecution of a case. School officials should instead rely on initial police investigations to provide the factual support for any related school disciplinary action.

Similarly, school officials are advised to keep peace officers removed from routine disciplinary matters. This is particularly true in interventions involving special education students since the MDE has taken the unusual position that “interventions” by a police liaison officer may be controlled by special education behavioral intervention rules applicable to all school officials. This interpretation has led MDE to conclude, at least in one instance, that a police liaison officer needed to be trained and knowledgeable about a student’s IEP before the officer became involved in intervening in the student’s misconduct.⁵

Recommendations for Effective Use of Police Liaison Officers

- Only involve police liaison officers for health, safety or criminal concerns.
- Ensure that district policies and contracts with law enforcement clearly define the role of police liaison officers.
- Conduct staff training on the appropriate use of police liaison officers.

Effective Utilization ... Continued on Page 24

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MASA Refocuses Legislative Committees



**by Charlie Kyte,
Executive Director
MASA**

Traditionally, MASA has had one legislative committee that focused on building a platform to bring to the Minnesota Legislature. However, this past year we made a board decision to enhance the work that we do with the Minnesota Legislature by changing the structure of our committees.

This year there are four sub-committees with membership from MASA members across the state and from all our component groups. Two of the sub-committees divide up the work of education finance and education policy. While these two areas have some overlap we wanted to develop strong positions in each area and those committees are doing so.

A third legislative committee is focusing primarily on issues of contracts and pensions for our members. In the past, we have been reluctant to take positions that could seem self-serving to our members, but we recognize that there are some serious deficiencies in the contracts for upper level school administrators and superintendents. We also wanted to have a group of our members keeping a closer eye on pension related issues.

The fourth sub-committee is designed to bring constant and steady information and pressure to our legislators. We

call this the Legislative “Contact” sub-committee. This group is devising a strategy by which our members will be interacting with legislators on a regular basis. Further, they are arranging for each region of the state to take certain days when a number of school leaders will be at the legislature interacting with the leadership and their own legislators. Our goal this year is to have our members at the capitol every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for the entire twelve weeks of the legislative session.

There has been good reception to this change of the legislative committee. The meetings have been very well attended, with our members coming in from all over the state. The discussions have been of great substance and we will see a strong legislative platform developed. We also will have a plan to carry our messages to the Minnesota Legislature.

We expect that the legislative platform will be mailed to our members around January 1, 2008 and you will have it when you come back to work after the winter holiday. That will give you an opportunity to prepare to bring these messages to your local legislators prior to the legislative session that begins on February 12th.

We can no longer stand back while working in our individual school districts and expect education legislation will be well shaped at the state level. It is to our collective action that can provide leadership on education policy and finance as we go forward. Members of these committees can be found in your 2008 Member Directory. •

Referendum Reflections

**by Charlie Kyte
Executive Director, MASA**

The process of raising money for school districts by referendum is not good public policy. Our public education system should not be held hostage to periodic whims of voters who vote “yes” or “no” on these school elections for a variety of reasons.

Those of you who experienced the “yes” vote can breathe a short-term sigh of relief. For those of you who experienced heated elections even a “yes” vote outcome leaves a sour taste in your communities. The “no” voters are resentful and become positioned against the public school. Those of you with “no” vote outcomes are faced with some degree of dismantling of your public school systems.

On the next page is a letter that I wrote to the governor and to the leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives about one week before the referendum elections occurred. •



*All of us here at MASA
would like to wish you and your family a
Happy Holiday Season!*



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*Charles E. Kyte, Ph.D.,
Executive Director*

October 26, 2007

A few days after you receive this letter, citizens in about 100 school districts will be voting on operating referendums. Every year, we see between 50 and 150 of these elections, and indication of our school's ongoing and increasing dependence on referendums to fund core education programs. The term "excess referendum" has become antiquated because today, referendums are funding basic public education.

The process of raising money via operating referendums is unpredictable at best. Elections are costly in terms of time and energy and they are politicizing our citizens interaction with their schools.

The future wellbeing of our state is based on our ability to develop our human capital. To do so we need the funding of our schools to be steady. Failure of even a portion of these referendums will send those schools into a financial and educational tailspin.

Many superintendents have reported to me that they have been spending precious little time concentrating on the improvement of their school programs. Rather they are just running these elections. Some are despairing of their current and future prospects of passing these referendum levies.

WE NEED A DIFFERENT SYSTEM! Either we need to replace the local levies with a state funded source, or we need to provide local boards with a more predictable method of maintaining their funding levels.

MASA will be bringing this issue forward in the coming months. We hope you will be a partner with us in seeking a more predictable funding solution.

On behalf of Public Education,

Dr. Charles (Charlie) Kyte, Executive Director, MASA

Scene Two, Take One



Shari Prest

by Shari Prest
ARK Associates

French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in 1831 and recorded his observations about American society in a detailed study called *Democracy In America*. One of his most important observations was the way Americans took responsibility for the greater good of communities. He reminded us that “America is great because she

is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” Part of the greatness we know as America has been the willingness of people to support government services, including a public system of education. As educational leaders, it is important that you have an ongoing conversation with your constituents to maintain and bolster their support and to help them understand the challenges and the possibilities of our schools. As part of the dialogue, it may be useful to do the following three things:

- 1. Help them examine the past, including the ideals on which public schools were founded and the history through which they have progressed.**

The Minnesota State Constitution articulates this concept of caring and being responsible, specifically for our children, through Article XIII, which requires that we support our public school system as follows:

Section 1. Uniform system of public schools. The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.

Over the decades as education became more common and more costly, a shift occurred from state funding for schools to funding dependent upon local property taxes. In 1971, the *Minnesota Miracle* diverted us from that trend when the state committed to take over the bulk of spending for K-12 education. The vision behind the policy was that “every child in Minnesota was entitled to a good public education, regardless of the property wealth of the community in which he or she lived” (Joel Kramer, Executive Director of Growth and Justice, and editor of the Star Tribune from 1983 to 1991, in remarks at Hamline University, March 24, 2005). Again in 2001, the state took over the general education levy, but without a sustained funding stream, the effort was largely unsuccessful.

That brings us to the present...and yet another lapse into increased reliance upon local property taxes to bear the burden of paying for our schools with a record number of levy referenda questions being proposed on election ballots. According John Gunyou, former Minnesota Commissioner of Finance to Republican Governor Arne Carlson, “The problem for local governments is that the property tax burden is back to where it was in 2001” in part because the state has been unwilling to keep up with inflation costs.

- 2. Help them to examine potential scenarios for the future based on the choices we make now.**

The most obvious scenario is always the status quo. In this case, it is to continue to erode funding for our public schools. Class sizes could grow even larger; local property taxes would increase; even more referenda proposals would rob precious time from educational leadership and the processes of teaching and learning. Our economy would stagnate and our reputation for top-notch schools and a high quality of life would suffer, eliminating Minnesota as the best place to live or raise a family or have a business. Unemployment would continue to rise and our status relative to other states would continue to deteriorate. As public investment goes down, economic growth will stop.

Another possible scenario is for our state to recommit to our kids and their futures. The collection and allocation of state resources would be restructured to recognize priorities and promote stable and equitable funding for school districts. In this scenario, history would be repeated: our higher ranking in public investment would result in advanced income growth and quality of life rankings. We would begin to collect taxes at the rate we did a decade ago, and have significant resources to invest in future development. The vision of providing every child in Minnesota access to a good public education would be realized.

- 3. Engage all stakeholders in identifying and creating the best possible outcomes for our kids and ourselves.**

Scenario planning is an attempt to build plausible views of a small number of alternative futures. Once the preferred future is formally or informally agreed upon, effective intervention and collective support become possible. It is increasingly important in the complex and dynamic environment of public education for school leaders to equip stakeholders with the necessary information to anticipate and participate in the realization of the best scenario for the schools. Every person in your community needs to be aware of the connection between input today and outcomes tomorrow. •

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LEADER'S *toolbox*

Run Your District Like A CEO

by Bruce Miles
Big River Consulting Group, LLC

A few of my most successful clients are business owners who don't have piles of file folders on their desks waiting for action. These business owners move ideas forward by mastering the art of delegation, preventing any "monkeys" from swinging onto their backs. This particular skill helps these people better leverage the people around them, and model a very effective problem-attack technique.

At a recent lunch, I watched as a superintendent was pitched an idea by an administrator in his organization. The idea would definitely need some of the superintendent's time before, and if, that idea became a reality.

The superintendent thanked the administrator for the idea, and the three of us talked through some possible upsides & downsides of the idea. Then the Superintendent asked the administrator to further investigate the upsides & downsides and e-mail a short update to him by the end of the week.

Remarkable behavior? Not hardly. But that superintendent is a master at not creating a bottleneck by putting work on his own desk, and he can be counted on to hand work to other people that are in the correct position in the organization to flesh out ideas and bring refined recommendations forward. Good business leaders do this effectively with vendors and suppliers; exceptional business leaders regularly do this with most of the key employees in their organizations.

A very effective superintendent that I know makes it a habit to not carry any papers or portfolios to most meetings within his district. (You can bet that all other people in those meetings have been trained to bring their own!) All work discussed and deemed to be of value will be verbally handed off by the superintendent to someone else in the meeting, with an agreed-upon time to report back regarding findings & results. The only time that I have seen him carry a portfolio is when he needs to have specific background information close at hand, or when he has a message to deliver that has specifics that may not yet be committed to memory.

Not having the highest paid employee complete low-cost work may seem obvious, but I don't want to see my superintendent clients doing time. Two other wise Superintendents regularly choose to spend some time flipping pancakes or burgers for teachers & staff, or choosing to be visible by lending a hand in a building in a pinch. These actions are well-thought out and can pay valuable dividends. But there is very little payback on an idea that gets bottlenecked because a superintendent said "That might be a good idea. Give it to me, I'll look it over & get back to you on it.", and then stacked it up with all of the other items that need his or her attention.

Is This a Big Ego Issue?

I am not suggesting that these effective superintendents believe that they are so important that they shovel all of their work onto other employees. I am suggesting that their time is valuable, and by not bottlenecking ideas or piling up work they are able to spend more time moving the District ahead by:

1. Spending more time on message with more employees re: priorities, goals, and accomplishments.
2. Growing employees by trusting them to look into new ideas and objectively bring possibilities forward.
3. Hand out praise for the completion of delegated items completed on time & delivered in a quality fashion.

Delegate with Direction

When an employee walks into your office with an idea, ask follow up questions to determine if the project has merit. But the words "I'll think about it and get back to you" should not be an option used too often.

Ask reflective questions to cause people to recognize what work should be completed and focus on what's important. That could include:

- What would it ultimately do for the district, students or community?
- How would this help us achieve one of our specific goals?
- What will it look like in six months if we're doing well?
- What are 2-3 things that need to be done if we decide to get started on it?

Ask the employee to write a one-page Executive Summary: One paragraph on the idea, one paragraph that identifies the scope, timeline and expected results. These carefully crafted paragraphs should provide superintendents with the information they need to make a decision.

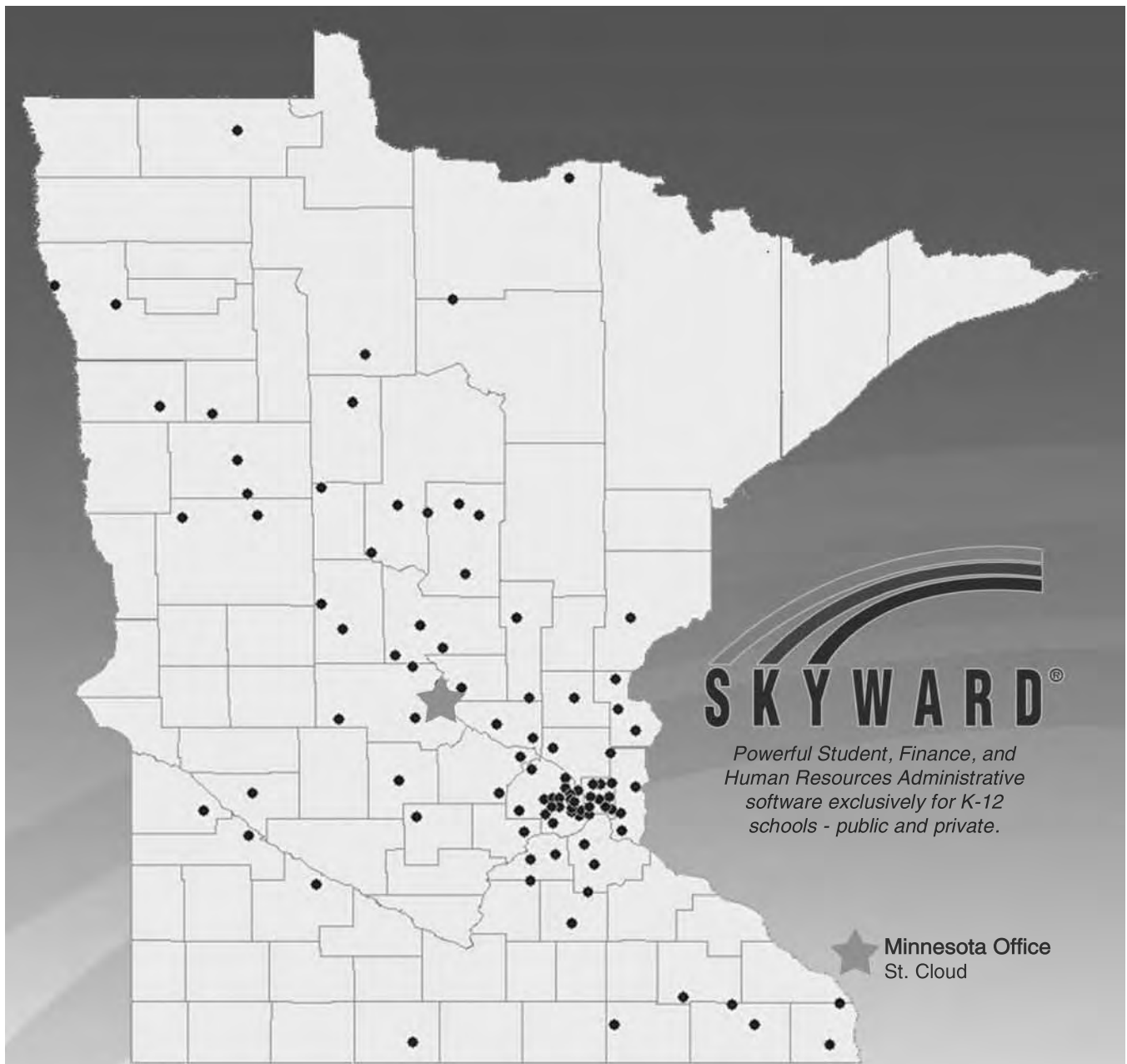
Remember too, that vendors, suppliers, collaborative partners, and selected community members may also be willing to be delegated to in order to move the district forward.

Ask about the idea. What do you want to know?

Consider the timeline. How soon do you want to know it?

Tap your resources. Where might the answers be?

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How Does Your District Communicate With the Outside World At Times of Emergency

by **Scott Monson**
Superintendent
Morris Area Schools

Whether a bomb threat, budget reductions, or inclement weather, communication during times of crisis is imperative. Like many districts, we have experienced all of these; consequently, I would offer four suggestions:

1. **Designate a single spokesperson:** be sure to designate a single spokesperson for the district and make sure that all inquiries for information go through that person. Typically, the superintendent is the one answering questions and sharing information, although others should be involved in determining when, how, and to whom information is communicated.
2. **Be honest:** people have a right to know what is happening. Tell people what you DO know and also what you DO NOT know. Simply answering, "I do not know but I will check and get back to you" is better than stating, "No comment."
3. **Be proactive:** communicate quickly and in as many ways as possible. We utilize the local newspaper, notes/ letters home with students, the school's web page, and an automated contact system whenever we want to share information. It is also important to keep staff members informed about what is going on, so they are aware of factual information.
4. **Important theme:** our priority in any crisis situation is what is best for our students and staff. This theme (along with others) is a consistent message in every communication we share – it lets others know what is most important.

Hopefully, these can be of some assistance to you in the event you find yourself in a crisis situation.

by **Barb Brown**
Director of Communications
South Washington County Schools

While there are a number of crises that can occur in a district, the crucial factor to communications success is being as prepared as possible. The South Washington County School District consistently communicates through the venues that are used in crisis situations. Using the same channels for emergency situations on a consistent basis will ensure that information will reach the community in a timely way.

The district recognizes the value of technology through

the web site, listservs and phone calling systems. The district also relies on traditional means, depending on the situation, through the local media, public cable access and if appropriate letters sent home with students.

Accessing web site and listservs (known as InfoToGo in the district) has become common practice for a large percent of the families in the district. New to the district this year is "Urgent Messages" that will reach out to the 5,000 people who have subscribed within just a matter of a few months. Again, depending on the situation, the district's calling system can reach homes within a matter of hours.

Selecting the appropriate venues to communicate is second to the development of key messages by a small team that prepares and disseminates the messages that are shared / formulated for the various communication channels.

by **Jim Johnson**
Superintendent
Monticello Schools

In emergency situations the way information is communicated makes all the difference in how your community perceives your handling of the situation. The best way to ensure a positive perception is to have a plan in place before the emergency occurs.

In dealing with emergencies in our district it has been critical that all media releases come from the superintendent. This ensures that all information is accurate and that the flow of information is controlled. Data privacy is always a concern and by having one point for information release we are able to control this issue. By being visible, sharing the appropriate information, and working in collaboration with other organizations, the superintendent will appear to be in control of the emergency and therefore gains the confidence of the community.

In the past 3 years our district has dealt with tragic losses of students and staff, we've implemented our lock-down plan, and we've had a fire in a building. By having a communication plan in place, we were able to meet the needs of our staff, students and community and avoid an issue turning into a crisis. •

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It Takes All of Us! Management Concerned for Public Education: MASA's PAC

by Charles Kyte
Executive Director, MASA

Through MASA, elected officials in our legislature and the executive branch of government are hearing the voice of the school leaders of Minnesota. Part of creating that voice is the attendance of MASA leaders at key fundraising events along the way. The vehicle to raise money for these events comes through "Management Concerned for Public Education (MCPE)." This is the political action arm of MASA and each year we ask our members to make a small contribution so money is available to use when fundraising events occur. "Regular" MASA revenue is not used to support this effort.

Minnesota has strict laws regarding influencing legislators

through expenditures of money. It is difficult, and properly so, for those with deep pockets to wine and dine legislators. There is a \$5 limit on any expenditure that you can make with a legislator. On the other hand, fundraisers by the political caucuses are permissible. MASA leaders attend many of these functions to help build the interpersonal relationships that are important in making the legislative process work.



All MASA members will be receiving a letter from Management Concerned for Public Education in the near future and you will be asked to make a contribution to MCPE. We need to raise approximately

\$10,000 annually to participate in the caucus fundraising events. Your small contribution goes a long way towards helping our association build the relationships that are helpful in promoting public education. •

MASA Foundation Strives to Serve Members

by Charles Kyte
Executive Director, MASA

The MASA foundation is governed by a board of directors made up of retired and active MASA members. The Foundation now has an endowment fund in excess of \$170,000 and the board has set a goal of having the endowment fund increase to \$500,000 within the next five years. The Foundation distributes grants to members as they continue to enhance their professional development and their professional opportunities.

The MASA Foundation has traditionally raised funds through our Fall Conference Golf Tournament and Spring Conference Silent Auction. A number of members have also made contributions of \$1000 or more to the Foundation. Most impressive was that over the last four years 100 active members of our association made pledges to contribute \$50 or \$100 each year over a period of four years.

We are now launching a new fund drive and have asked every member of MASA to consider giving a little back to

help build an endowment for the future so we can continue to educate and provide opportunities for our members. If you haven't already turned one in, call the office and make a commitment to the MASA Foundation. Your support would be appreciated.



Over the past two years, the Foundation has helped fund a number of our members participating in trips to China to examine their education system. We have sent members from small districts to national conferences that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend. We have had several members engage mentors to help teach them how to do strategic planning and move complex processes forward in their school districts. This spring, the MASA Foundation will once again distribute grants to a number of members for their professional growth. Watch for announcements about the topic

areas and direction from the Foundation so you too could participate in the grant process. •

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MASA Recognizes Leadership and Service Congratulations Award Recipients!



MASA service pins and certificates were presented at the 2007 Fall Conference. We proudly recognize these MASA members for their years of leadership as administrators or superintendents.

30 Year Superintendent (Gold Pin with Sapphire):

Don Hanson, Superintendent, Long Prairie-Grey Eagle Schools
Dennis Peterson, Superintendent, Minnetonka Schools

25 Year Superintendent (Gold Pin with Ruby):

Dan Brooks, Superintendent, Sauk Centre Schools
James Redfield, Superintendent, Retired

10 Year Superintendent Certificate:

Anthony Boyer, Superintendent, LeCenter Schools
Phil Johnson, Superintendent, Virginia Schools

35 Year Administrator (Silver Pin with Diamond):

Dennis Rislove, Alder Graduate School

30 Year Administrator (Silver Pin with Sapphire):

Jack Almos, Superintendent, Hinckley-Finlayson Schools
DuWayne Balken, Retired, Lakes Country Service Cooperative
Darwin Bostic, Superintendent, Pine City Schools

25 Year Administrator (Silver Pin with Ruby):

Michael Doro, Superintendent, Northland Community Schools
Les Norman, Superintendent, Lake Crystal-Wellcome-Memorial Schools

20 Year Administrator (Silver Pin):

Peter Grant, Superintendent, Kasson-Mantorville Schools
Jerry Kjergaard, Superintendent, Waconia Schools
Bruce Klaehn, Superintendent, Dover-Eyota Schools
Larry Peterson, Superintendent, Eden Valley-Watkins Schools
Charles Rick, Superintendent, St. Louis County Schools

15 Year Administrator Certificate:

Linda Mitchell, Academies Administrator, Minnesota State Academies
Scott Thielman, Superintendent, Albany Area Schools

10 Year Administrator Certificate:

Chris Mills, Superintendent, Stephen-Argyle Schools

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Information will be mailed—and will also be available at www.mnasa.org. See you there!

MASA Awards Recognize Outstanding Leadership

Administrators of Excellence Award
Kay E. Jacobs Award
MASA Distinguished Service Award
Richard Green Scholars Program

Each year, the MASA/MASE Spring Conference provides an opportunity to recognize outstanding members who are dedicated leaders and advocates for children and Minnesota education. We encourage you to consider nominating yourself or a colleague for recognition. Nominate someone who you feel reflects the qualities of a leader who is committed to education and who is an exemplary representative of MASA.

Information packets with award nomination forms will be emailed to all members. Award background information is also available on the MASA web site (www.mnasa.org).

Nominations are due by January 15, 2008.



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2008 Officer Nominations Coming Soon!



MASA annual elections are just around the corner.

Watch your e-mail for Officer and Board of Director's nominations forms.

Supersizing the Holidays

by Joe Cavanaugh
Founder & CEO, Youth Frontiers, Inc.

Aah... 'tis the season to give and get and stuff oneself..to be full. My mailbox overfloweth with catalogs on what to buy and how to be happy. When I was young, all I needed to be happy was a Hot Wheels set. *Then* all would be well. *Then* I would be satisfied. I got the Hot Wheels deluxe set, and I was satisfied—for three hours. Today, marketers succeed in convincing young people to desire the newest Playstation 3, to rent the biggest limo for prom, or to go on the wildest Spring Break trip; in other words, to “supersize” it. And although we are getting more than we need, this hyperconsumption doesn’t really make us happy because three hours later the focus shifts to yet another wish unfulfilled.

Many kids today are infected with an insatiable hunger—to have more, do more, be more. We’ve helped create a generation of children who feel endless desire and yet never feel complete. We fill their schedules with so much that they never have time to dream or seek paths that one day may fulfill them.

By giving our children so much, we create a generation of gluttons with holes in their consciences: teenagers who ask only “What do I *get*?” and not “What should I *give*?” It is this teenager who tomorrow, in corporate offices, decides whether to market violent video games or, who may be in a position of influence to your child or grandchild. I believe that most of us mean well when we overindulge our children, but we do so at the expense of their true wellbeing. To live a life only thinking of oneself is not a life well lived.

A friend of mine once said, we should love people and use things—not the other way around. Too many teenagers—and indeed, too many adults—never recognize that they need things deeper than Razr phones and double lattes. We cannot allow consumption to trump character. It is our responsibility to teach young people that the person who has the most toys may still be an unhappy and lonely person.

Suggestions:

- During the holiday season, share with your teenager what you’re most grateful for.
- Give a gift of a donation to the charity of your child’s choice instead of a toy.
- Buy your child a book instead of a video game.
- Embrace the word “no” as a critical part of your child’s development. •

Joe Cavanaugh is Founder and CEO of Youth Frontiers, Inc., a Minnesota-based nonprofit that delivers programs that improve school climate and strengthen student character in schools throughout the nation. For more information on Youth Frontiers, please visit www.youthfrontiers.org.

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PaySchools has been developed specifically for school districts to process online transactions for everything from field trips to community education classes to lunches. It can work with existing point-of-sale applications or replace them. PaySchools is a web-based technology, so there is no need to purchase new hardware or software.

MSBA and MASA saw a number of benefits in choosing to sponsor PaySchools instead of other payment processing systems. PaySchools is highly secure, and it has a fee structure that makes it possible for districts large and small to use the system. There are no minimum purchases, no subscription fees, no maintenance fees, no installation or

consulting fees—simply a flat 3.5 percent of the district's transactions. The fees are recouped through greater efficiencies, fewer bounced and lost checks, and a higher cash flow.

For information, visit the PaySchools web site at www.payschools.com. You may also contact Tiffany Rodning (trodning@mmsba.org) or Shelley Tougas (stougas@mmsba.org) to learn more or to set up a demonstration that you can view from your office computer. •

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A Healthy Dose of Positive Feedback!

New Look of School Milk

"We are role models. If we provide children with good menus and appealing alternatives, like the New Look of School Milk, they will learn to make better choices."

School Nutrition Director



"Students have benefited nutritionally and academically from Breakfast in the Classroom. Teachers report the children are more productive, ready to learn and less disruptive."

School Nutrition Director



"I enjoy teaching Little D's Nutrition Expedition because it is a cross-curricular program, and it teaches the nutrition objectives required by the state."

Second Grade Teacher



"In my school there are so many demands on class time; this program efficiently ties nutrition education to literacy education, which is so important."

Fourth Grade Teacher

For more information contact your local Dairy Council® or visit www.NutritionExplorations.org

MDC MIDWEST DAIRY COUNCIL®
800-406-6455 | dairycouncil@midwestdairy.com



NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL®

Calendar 2007 - 2008

December 31 & January 1

Winter Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

January 16

Great Start Workshop IV & Year 2 Cohort II
Hyatt, Minneapolis

January 17-18

MSBA Winter Convention
Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

February 6

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

February 12

MASA Foundation Board of Trustees Meeting
MASA Offices, St. Paul

February 14 - 17

AASA National Convention
Tampa, FL

February 15

Newsletter Submissions Due

February 16

MASA Foundation Board Meeting
MASA Offices, St. Paul

March 21

Spring Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

April 2

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

April 2

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

April 3-4

MASA & MASE Spring Conference
Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

May 15

Newsletter Submissions Due

May 27

Spring Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

June 12 - 13

MASA Board of Directors Retreat
Madden's Resort, Brainerd



Effective Utilization ... Continued From Page 6

- Designate administration that will serve as primary contact with law enforcement (exceptions may exist for emergency situations)
- Avoid drafting IEPs/behavior plans that limit the authority of school officials to involve law enforcement.
- Don't play the role of police or prosecutor. •

¹See *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 105 S.Ct. 733 (1985). It should be noted that the requirement for "individualized suspicion" may not be required in all instances, such as locker searches. See Minn. Stat. § 121A.72.

² According to the American Bar Association's definition, probable cause has been interpreted to mean obtainment of "facts sufficient to support a reasonable belief that criminal activity is probably taking place or knowledge of circumstances indicating a fair probability that evidence of crime will be found. Definition provided by American Bar Association.

³ See *Wilson v. Cahokia Sch. Dist. No. 187*, Slip Op. 05-297-GPM (S.D. Ill. 2007).

⁴ See *Milligan v. City of Slidell*, 226 F.3d 652 (5th Cir. 2000).

⁵ See MDE Complaint No. 1013 (1999).



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