

# Leaders FORUM

Winter 2009

## Patty Phillips Minnesota Superintendent of the Year

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Superintendent Patty Phillips, Superintendent for the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools, the 2010 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

As the Minnesota honoree, Superintendent Phillips 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 13, 2010 in Phoenix, Arizona.

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



Patty Phillips  
Superintendent  
N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale

regional, national, and international issues.

Superintendent Phillips was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. “Patty Phillips is truly an exemplary leader,” says MASA Executive Director Dr. Charles Kyte. “She is a skilled collaborative leader who knows how to help her district community envision positive change and chart a course for achievement. We are proud to have Patty

represent Minnesota’s superintendents as Superintendent of the Year.”

Superintendent Phillips has been superintendent for the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools since 2005.

With an enrollment of 11,000 students, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale serves students in seven suburban communities east of St. Paul. There are nine elementary schools within the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District, along with three middle schools, two high schools, an early childhood education center, an alternative learning center and a senior center. The district regularly receives state and national recognition for achievement in the arts, academics, community service and athletics.

The North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School Board Chair nominated Superintendent

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## How is Your Balance? Functioning in a Healthy Emotional State

A few weeks ago, I was having a very challenging week. Out of the blue, I received a call from my friend, Craig Oftedahl, Superintendent of Warroad Schools. Craig called to see how things were going. His call could not have come at a better time. Craig's simple act of making a phone call was truly a day brightener for me. Spirits were lifted and I regained a positive outlook.



Gary Amoroso  
Superintendent  
MASA President

As you are reading this article, our days are getting shorter. The temperatures are getting colder, and winter is on the horizon. As school leaders we continue to work through the many challenges that come our way on a daily basis. As we work through these situations we can feel alone and isolated from those around us.

Maintaining our physical and emotional health must be a priority. An article entitled "Keep Yourself Clear of Emotional Toxins" was published in June of 2009 in the Galileo for Superintendents Newsletter. The article stated that insecurity, worry and ceaseless conflict can emit toxins within each of our organizations. Unless we clean up this emotional waste, we will struggle to keep the stress from clouding our decision making processes. Studies show that our emotional mind responds much more quickly than our rational mind. When acting out of emotion, we sometimes spring into action without pausing to weigh the implications. In order to avoid this type of situation, we each need to put stress and anxiety in their proper place. Thus creating a more harmonious hopeful workplace and an emotionally healthier you. Following are actions which will provide you an opportunity to function in a healthy emotional state:

### Identify emotions:

- Know the impact your moods have on others.
- Use both negative and positive emotions as sources of wisdom in

navigating your life.

- Monitor your feelings moment to moment.

### Manage emotions

- Stay calm under pressure.
- Stay in charge of how you feel.
- Shake off negative feelings when they overtake you.

### Understand emotions

- Pick up on subtle social clues that indicate what people really want or need.

- Be attuned to others feelings.
- Build rapport.

### Channel emotions

- Recognize how emotions (yours and others') influence thinking and acting.
- Develop a knack to improve others' moods.
- Motivate people to achieve goals.

By continuing to develop our skills in these areas, we can be role models for, and support, all members of our organization.

I believe it is very important that each of us realize the role we play with one another, and that we have the opportunity to have a positive impact on our colleagues. A simple phone call, an email, or some other type of connection truly helps us to feel that we are not alone in the work that we do on behalf of the children, staff and communities that we serve. My wish for each of you, as we move through winter, is that you will work hard to eliminate the emotional toxins in your life and replace them with healthier thoughts and actions. As always, please feel free to contact me if there is anything I can do for you.

The *Leaders Forum* is your newsletter and we welcome your input. Please send your ideas or articles to Mary Law at [mrllaw@mnasa.org](mailto:mrllaw@mnasa.org).

### Leaders Forum

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## Patty Phillips Continued from Page 1

Phillips for the Superintendent of the Year Award. “Patty is by far the most energetic, dedicated, strong, enthusiastic, positive leader in education that I have had the pleasure of working with,” says North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School Board Chair Nancy Livingston. “Patty is an amazing superintendent who has dedicated her whole life to education.”

Superintendent Phillips is especially noted as someone who will leave a lasting impact on our educational system. Patty is passionate about education, a strong advocate for all students, an excellent communicator, a wise and fearless administrator and a tremendous role model. She has surrounded herself with a strong administrative team dedicated to excellence in student achievement. Superintendent Phillips is a lifelong learner and models her passion for learning and continuous improvement to staff and colleagues. Patty has spearheaded the task of moving the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale school board from a role of management to policy governance. She takes the time to get to know staff and students by spending time in schools. Chair Nancy Livingston states, “Being around students energizes her, which invigorates others. Patty is student centered, genuinely takes an interest in students and constantly interacts with them to get their perspectives on topics.”

Superintendent Phillips was asked about how 21st century skills are defined by her and how has her district changed the learning students receive in response.

“I define 21st century skills as the palette for today’s digitally born artists...the operating system they need to master in order to maximize the potential of their technologically savvy minds...the BAM...kick it up a notch ingredients that will make our students come out on top.” Superintendent Phillips goes on to say, “21st century skills are learned and applied through relevant content, with more focus on the process of thinking than the process of remembering. Students in collaborative teams are completing complex projects; evaluating the pros and cons of various solutions to problems; and increasing their engagement with each other and the world beyond school through project based learning activities that connect to real world solutions. (With) our new technologies and the merging of content with skills (we) have moved our students from consumers in silos to interactive producers.”

Superintendent Phillips was asked how has her district changed involvement in an effort to respond to the changing needs of families.

“Our school district’s number one goal is to improve student achievement, close learning gaps and create a sustained sense of urgency for positive change. Parent involvement makes an enormous impact on students’ attitudes, attendance and achievement,” Superintendent Phillips stated. “To respond to the changing needs of our families, the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District has ramped up our outreach to our students and their families. We realize that one size doesn’t fit all so we are instituting a number

of initiatives.” Some of those initiatives include: hiring a homeless liaison; hosting Parent Learning Academies; funding all day Kindergarten for all students; teaming social workers with community service agencies; increased targeted services programming; and hosted bi-monthly coffee and conversation with the superintendent and school board members.

Superintendent Phillips was asked what action has her school district taken in response to the economic downturn.

“We’ve gouged fifteen million dollars out of our budget; but we have reallocated resources, written grants, formed relationships with some exciting business partners, and added initiatives that are helping us achieve our vision. We are providing free, all day kindergarten for all students; have added literacy and math specialists in each of our nine elementary schools; have provided free ACT Testing for all students; have added half an hour onto the elementary school day; instituted a late start for our two high schools; significantly increased the number of students taking Advanced Placement and College in the Schools courses...renovated our technology infrastructure and decreased our replacement cycle from ten years to five,” Superintendent Phillips stated. “We are living proof that with every crisis comes an opportunity.”

In a letter of support from Marc Cove, Senior Vice President of Platinum Bank, Superintendent Phillips is praised for, “Through her example of just ‘doing’ and her ability to speak passionately about the benefits of a strong and successful school system, she has loaded the train with teachers, parents, administrators and a significant amount of business leaders. All for kids and the version of community well educated kids bring with them.”

In a letter of support, Dr. Lori Simon of St. Paul Schools praised Superintendent Phillips’ leadership. “Patty has a passion for her work and leads with a clear vision of what a rigorous and nurturing education environment looks like. She had cultivated a district culture of shared vision and purpose that is focused on what is best for students...Patty has established strong relationships and a shared efficacy of purposeful community and mutual respect.” Dr. Simon goes on to state, “Throughout her work, Patty leads with passion and grace, and embraces challenges through her collaborative leadership. Patty has high expectations for herself and those she works with, and serves as a great role model for students, staff, parents and community.”

Larry Eberhard, Keller Williams Realtor, praises Superintendent Phillips in a letter of support, “Perhaps the greatest quality Patty possesses is her passion in a leadership role for learning. She lives, unequivocally, to better the students, staff and board members that surround her through an environment grounded in learning...it has been inspiring and encouraging to see the changes that Patty has brought about in her role as leader, communicator, professional and ultimate champion for this district.”

Superintendent Phillips received her master’s and bachelor of science degrees from the University of Minnesota. Before

Continued on Page 4

## Legislative Session 2010 Opportunity or Trepidation?

The State of Minnesota is in a world of hurt regarding its budget and finances. All of the indicators tell us that the state is going to continue to be short of money as we go into the second year legislative session of this biennium. But it is unclear right now how much, if anything, will be done about the problem.

The 2010 Legislative Session begins in February. It could run into early May. However, a number of legislators would like to see the session held to six weeks or so, wrap up the work of the session, get back to their districts to begin their re-election campaigns and simply leave well enough alone on the legislative front. There are others that feel the budget problem should begin to be addressed now in 2010 so it is not quite so large when we get to the next biennium and the first session of that biennium which begins in January 2011.

The second year of each biennial session is the bonding session. This means that the state will put together a plan to borrow quite a large amount of money which in turn will be used to build state facilities such as highways, light rail, college buildings, as well as other government facilities. Of course, the list of projects greatly outstrips the actual money that can be spent and it's an interesting legislative process to watch all of the various entities maneuver to get their share of the money. Public education typically has not been a player in this effort as money for facilities for K-12 school buildings comes from local sources rather than from a state-bonding bill.

There will no doubt be many bills introduced on the policy front in every area of state government including education. Some of them will be designed to place greater control on schools where there are perceived inadequacies and others may be designed to change policy that might slightly reduce the cost of operating our schools. Many of the ideas in the policy bills will not be helpful to schools and the lobbyists for many of the education organizations will work to have them dropped by the wayside.

Another important area that will see some work this year is in the area of pensions. Almost all of the pension funds in Minnesota have seen dramatic losses in the economic downturn of this past year and are only now beginning to regain their footing. The teachers retirement system (TRA) has been especially hard hit partially because that the reserves that should have been built up in the post-retirement fund in the 1990's were used to provide large increases to those that were retired at that time. In retrospect, it looks like that money was squandered by giving it to retirees in extraordinary large increases rather than being held in the fund to protect it during a downturn.



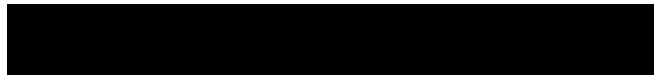
Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of  
School Administrators

Resolving some of the problems around the TRA fund will be complex and there will be various opinions of how we should be doing this. However, don't be surprised to see a requirement that employers put in more money, that the active employees put in more money, and that retirees have increases in their pensions frozen for a period of time.

Another possibility is asking the State of Minnesota for a direct cash infusion to help reduce the shortfall in the fund. This isn't such an unreasonable thing to ask when you consider that the state has frozen education funding for a couple of years, will probably freeze going forward and have borrowed large amounts of money from the school districts to close the budget gap. Perhaps

they should put some money in the pension fund to help stabilize it rather than forcing active members and employers to increase contributions at this time.

In summary, the legislative session may be limited, short and involve mostly bonding OR it may spin into some budget fixes, pension solutions and policy areas. In either event, MASA will have lobbyists at the capitol helping to serve the interests of K-12 education all during the session.



### Patty Phillips Continued from Page 3

becoming Superintendent for the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools, she was superintendent for the Virginia Schools. Prior to the superintendency, Patty was a Kindergarten Teacher, Director of Curriculum & Staff Development and Elementary Principal for the Virginia Schools.

Long Term Care Insurance Advocates is the sponsor of the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year program. ARAMARK Education, ING, and the American Association of School Administrators are cosponsors of the National Superintendent of the Year award program.



# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

## Healthy Educational Communities Are Needed Now More Than Ever

by Jerry Robicheau  
Associate Professor, MN State University Mankato and  
MASA Board of Director Representative

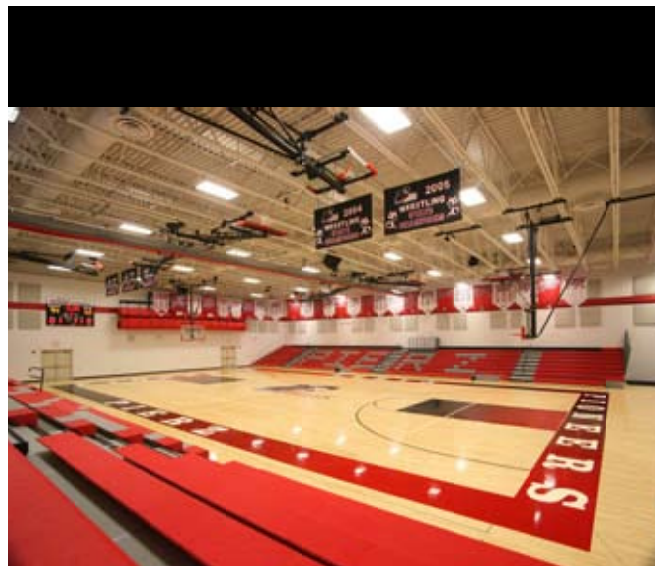
**A**n educational community moves beyond the “school house wall.” It is the totality of a support system for students. An educational community includes families, schools, business, faith community, and other agencies that have as a mission to provide support.

The need for a healthy educational community is more needed today than it ever has been. No one ever predicted the magnitude the ramifications the economic downturn would have on the educational community. The ramifications of the economic downturn and other factors have had an impact inside and outside of the schools. These ramifications included, but by no means limited to unmanageable class sizes, limited support systems within the schools and communities, limited co-curricular opportunities. Each of these factors can and does have an impact on the education of students.

So what can we do about this? We need to create healthy educational communities. We as educational leaders need to step forth and provide the leadership, working in collaboration with other governmental and social service agencies, needed to create a healthy educational community. We can do nothing less; it is our ethical/moral responsibility. Truly, this is not an easy task. So how do we do this? Most important is we all need to know, identify and implement in our communities the salient component of a healthy educational community. Based on the work of the Blandin Foundation the basic ingredients of a healthy educational community consist of: (a) economic opportunities; communities where all people have an opportunity to earn an income to live with dignity. This requires schools and business working together to assure employable skills are embedded in the schools curriculum, (b) life long learning; communities where all ages have access to educational opportunities. Creating a community culture where education is valued for all ages especially starting in early childhood, (c) valuing diversity; communities where all people uphold the values of inclusion, cooperation, and empowerment and respect for all citizens. A community where diversity is embraced, (d) recreational, spiritual and cultural opportunities; communities where everyone has access to a variety of spiritual, cultural and recreational opportunities that will enrich each citizen young an old, (e) safety and security; communities that provide appropriate safety and security measure, (f) environmental stewardship; communities that support the environmental quality and

management of natural resources that best provides for the future so future generations will be able to live in a healthy environment and one that is secure, (g) community leadership; communities where there is a broad based leadership structure and many people fill leadership roles. Where shared governance is the responsibility of all governmental agencies working together for its citizens (students are citizens), and (h) infrastructure and services; communities that have adequate infrastructure and all people have access to essential services.

If we as educational leaders live these components, we will be on the path of ensuring that our students are educated in a healthy educational community. We cannot do anything less!



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# RESILIENT SCHOOL LEADERS

## Cognitive Flexibility Forming a New Habit

The very day I was asked to write this article I was in the doldrums of disharmony with parents, staff and board members regarding opinions on course offerings and schedules at one of our schools. No question, I was nearing my capacity for calm, patience and centeredness. It was a "cup half empty" kind of day and my joy for leadership was faltering. My mind was tired and my body was responding to these circumstances by pumping more of this and that in order to re-establish homeostatis<sup>1</sup>.

I have learned that the human brain has evolved to seek homeostasis for the body (p.6, Sapolsky)<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, our brains are responding in this manner whether the perceived threat is for physical safety or a psychological worry. And, as you might guess, when you are lying in bed awake in the middle of the night, it is not likely from impending physical danger but rather a psychological worry causing your body to evoke the flight or fight response.

Admittedly, I have been at this place several times in the past and I am keenly aware that I must take responsibility for my attitude about this adversity. Truly, I am not a victim of circumstances but a skilled sailor in the storm, right? I have learned the practice of leadership and certainly I know when adversity begins to threaten my well-being and possibly my health, right?

I am reading the book, Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers (3rd edition), by Robert M. Sapolsky. Dr. Sapolsky is a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University. His writing provides recent research on stress, the human body and its response to stress, and how we might maintain more healthy responses to the stressors in our lives. There are no easy answers and the complex relationships between stressors, the range of human responses to stressors, and human biological and personal differences discourage drawing simplistic conclusions.

One insight for me are the principles of dealing with psychological stress. We can change our coping styles in response to stressors. We can:

1. Move from learned helplessness to a sense of responsibility and control,
2. Move from viewing circumstances as unpredictable to recognizing patterns and repetition, thereby giving us confidence in the face of returning challenge,
3. Move from the experiences of isolation to



Mark Wolak  
Superintendent  
Mahtomedi

finding social supports to help us frame the circumstances, and

4. Find outlets for our frustration that include exercise, relationships, and faith and spirituality, to name but a few.

And, here is a new concept for me: Cognitive Flexibility, picking the right strategy to explain or respond to events in your work life. On that issue of school schedules and course offerings, I picked a new strategy and asked community education leadership to design and lead a community engagement process in partnership with parent association leaders, administration and school board. Thus, my role changed from

primary leader to one of partnership with other leaders to solve a complex problem. Our coping reflex at times of stress reinforces habitual behavior, and, unfortunately, we keep using the same strategy instead of switching to a new one. Trying something new is difficult, but often it is just what is needed<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Homeostatis - the idea that the body has an ideal level of oxygen that it needs, an ideal degree of acidity, an ideal temperature and so on. All these different variables are maintained in homeostatic balance, the state in which all sorts of physiological measures are being kept at optimal levels (page 6, Sapolsky.)

<sup>2</sup>Sapolsky, Robert M. (2004) Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers. Henry Holt and Company, New York



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# The Risks of Unvaccinated Students in Our Schools

In recent years, we have been inundated with news about vaccines from almost every media outlet. For good or bad, the availability of information and misinformation at the touch of a button has fanned the flames of controversies real and invented. Recently in Minnesota, there has been an increase in the number of people signing conscientious objection forms and refusing some or all vaccinations for their children. Regardless of the reasons, more unvaccinated kids means we have more students in our schools who are susceptible to certain diseases. Should we be concerned about this trend? What are the potential risks and to whom?



Catherine Crosby-Schmidt, MD, FAAP  
Central Pediatrics

Decreasing immunization rates in a community place three main groups of people at risk. First, those who remain unvaccinated by personal or parental choice are obviously susceptible if a disease outbreak occurs. Second, people who for medical reasons cannot be vaccinated are at risk of infection. This group includes kids with an immune system disorder, those who take medicine to suppress their immune systems (such as kids who have had transplants or who have certain chronic diseases), kids allergic to eggs (for influenza vaccine), and, very rarely, people with a true allergy to a vaccine. With the increasing complexity of medical treatments over the last few decades, many more children with chronic health conditions are living normal lives and attending school and other social functions. Unfortunately, many of those children are medically fragile, so are more likely than their healthy peers to have severe complications if they develop a disease such as measles, whooping cough, or chickenpox. Finally, the third often overlooked group at risk is those people who have been fully immunized but who did not develop immunity. Our regularly given immunizations certainly provide protection for most recipients but have differing degrees of effectiveness. No vaccine series creates immunity in 100% of those who receive it. This means there will always be those kids whose parents have done what they can to protect them, but who remain at risk if exposed.

How concerned should we be? We live in a generally healthy society where we see more health problems from obesity than from measles, polio or diphtheria. Why do vaccines matter anymore? The answer lies in the fact that we do not live in isolated communities, but in a global, interconnected world. All of the diseases for which we vaccinate are still real diseases that kill or harm children in our world, even in 2009. With adoption, foreign study, pleasure, and business making international travel increasingly common, contact with any one of these vaccine-preventable diseases remains possible.

This increased contact coupled with growing numbers of susceptible students in our schools increases the chance for a preventable disease to take hold and spread.

Perhaps measles is one of the best examples to illustrate the potential risk. In 1962, there were an estimated 3 to 4 million cases of measles in the United States with 48,000 associated hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. After FDA approval of the measles vaccine in 1963, those numbers declined dramatically over just a few years and continued to dwindle. In 2001, there were just 81 cases of measles in the U.S. and no hospitalizations or deaths reported. The majority of these cases were import-associated. In just the first 7 months of 2008, however, there were 131 cases of measles in the U.S. - more than in any similar time period since 1996. A concerning difference from previous outbreaks is that as many as three-fourths of these cases may have been due to secondary transmission within the United States, rather than imported. The vast majority - over 90% - of these recent measles cases occurred in unvaccinated people. This increasing number of measles cases makes the recent increasing numbers of conscientious objections all the more concerning.

From a public health standpoint, a well-vaccinated community may be able to safely include a tiny percentage of people who are not immune to preventable diseases. Those susceptible people are, to some degree, protected by the large numbers of immune people surrounding them. If almost everyone is immune, you are much less likely to be exposed to a disease. However, if too many people are unimmunized, either by choice or necessity, a community's collective immunity or "herd immunity" declines and the risk of related disease outbreaks increases. Sporadic outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have occurred in the U.S. for decades and, until those diseases are eradicated worldwide, will likely continue to occur. A significant decline in immunization rates in our schools will open the door to larger and more deadly outbreaks.

As a pediatrician, I firmly believe in both the safety and effectiveness of our vaccine schedule in the U.S. That does not mean the vaccines are 100% safe. Rather, it means that I feel the risks associated with vaccines are substantially less than the risks associated with remaining unvaccinated. Regardless of how individuals feel about potential vaccine side effects, we must consider the very real risks to our communities if a substantial decline occurs in our immunization rates.



# INVEST IN MINNESOTA

## Taking Leadership Into the Community Making the Extraordinary Happen

**E**ffective school leaders reach out in their communities and beyond to facilitate and promote a vision for teaching and learning that inspires the interest and support of stakeholders and improves the capacity of schools.

Leadership expert and corporate executive Alan Keith says, "Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen." The first step is ensuring that people are engaged and have meaningful stories and information with which to form and share opinions.



Shari Prest  
Ark Associates

**Reassessing** the effectiveness of the changes you make, and then adapting for maximum effectiveness.

**Reminding** people that even in hard times, our hope for a more prosperous future lies in the education of our children and the preparation of our workforce.

This year, **INVESTMN** will provide you with data and talking points on a wide range of topics, as well as other Bits 'n Pieces and "members only" articles. They will appear in your organization's newsletters and/or websites.

*"We truly have, in our hands, the future.*

*What we do to help that future blossom matters."* – Gary Amoroso, Superintendent of Lakeville Area Schools, MASA Conference, 2009

Invest your time in:

**Reevaluating** your priorities in view of the increasingly important role public relations and community play in school/student success.

**Reimagining** public education with adequate community, parent and political support.

**Reinvesting** in your school's/district's vision and expectations as they relate to public relations and public engagement.



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INVESTMN (previously Champions for Children™) is a public relations partnership of MASA, MASSP, and MESPA created to improve public perceptions and political behaviors as they relate to our schools and school leaders. INVESTMN is a communications resource to help you make the work you already do more efficient and effective. INVESTMN's effectiveness is dependent upon educational leaders' commitment to accessing and using the INVESTMN resources provided through your organization's newsletters and websites.



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## Negotiations of the 2009-2011 Teacher Master Agreements

**M**any school districts have not executed 2009-2011 master agreements with the teachers' bargaining unit. While reliable settlement statistics may not be readily available, it appears that many districts will be negotiating or mediating through December and right up to the January 15 deadline. It is possible that a number of school districts may not meet the January 15 deadline in 2010.

Districts still in negotiations or mediation face many challenges and issues as they attempt to conclude a 2009-2011 master agreement. I would like to share a few of my personal thoughts and observations about current issues in 2009-2011 teacher negotiations. I do so as an attorney who has represented school boards for over 20 years as chief negotiator and legal counsel in teacher negotiations, and has been heavily engaged in the 2009-2011 round of bargaining.



Gloria Blaine Olson  
Attorney  
Kennedy & Graven

- 1. January 15 Settlement Deadline:** In prior rounds of teacher bargaining where the January 15 statutory settlement deadline was in effect, school districts had concerns about the negative reaction from the public if the January 15 settlement deadline was not met. Public blame for not settling by the deadline was directed toward the school board, not the teachers' negotiators. There does not seem to be as much concern by some school districts during this round of bargaining about not meeting the January 15 deadline. School boards appear more willing to pass the January 15 deadline, especially when the alternative is an unreasonable, expensive settlement. Some school boards have communicated with the public about the one-time "cost" of missing the January 15 deadline compared to the higher and "ongoing cost" of an expensive settlement. Districts have done so in an effort to minimize the public blaming only the school boards for failure to settle by January 15.
- 2. Who Needs a 2009-2011 Master Agreement?:** Asking who needs a 2009-2011 agreement may sound cavalier, but this is a question school boards need to ask themselves if they cannot reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Most master agreement duration clauses provide for the terms and conditions of the 2007-2009 master agreement to continue after June 30, 2009 if a new 2009-2011 agreement is not reached by June 30, 2009. (There are many versions of duration clauses in teacher master agreements, and it is important that you know the legal implications of the duration clause in your master agreement.) Under the current financial

conditions, having the terms of the 2007-2009 agreement continue through the 2009-2011 period might be a fair and reasonable resolution. In essence, this would result in some version of a "soft freeze," depending on the specific language in the 2007-2009 agreement.

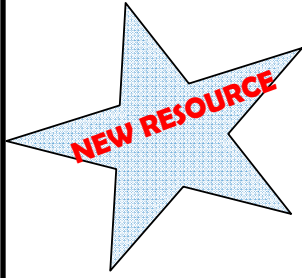
Of course, legal, practical, labor relations and public perception factors of the above strategy must be carefully evaluated. PELRA provides corresponding "economic action" rights to the union and the public employer in situations where the parties cannot reach a new agreement: the union can strike, and the employer can implement terms and conditions of employment after impasse in accordance with PELRA. ("Impasse" is a complex legal concept and districts should not make conclusions regarding whether their

school board and teachers are at impasse without legal advice.) In the uncertain and unpredictable economic environment, it may be that neither the teachers nor the board will exercise the "economic rights."

Also, keep in mind that lack of a new 2009-2011 agreement does not mean that the teachers are "working without an agreement" as the teachers often claim. Rather, the 2007-2009 teachers' contracts are continuing indefinitely. There are districts in Minnesota that have been so delayed in settling a two-year contract that they end up negotiating two two-year contracts in one round of bargaining. Remember, all open contracts will be settled; it is a question of when and for what.

- 3. More Time Off in Lieu of Salary Schedule Increases:** Teacher negotiations committees are proposing more time off in various forms to "compensate" for the lack of salary schedule increases. Teacher negotiations committees across the state are justifying proposals for more paid time off by citing the district's limited ability to increase wages and the increased time, energy and effort teachers must put into their jobs. Teachers point to the increasing expectation from the state and federal governments, politicians, parents, school boards, and administrators. True, expectations of public schools and teachers are rising while public funding is diminishing. But boards need to consider the "real cost" of giving teachers more paid time off because these types of concessions will live on in subsequent contracts. As you know, once a benefit (especially more time off) ends up in a collective

Continued on Page 23



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# The Federal Government Continuing to Influence State K-12 Education Programs

by Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators

Last year, in the midst of the greatest recession that we have seen since the Depression of the 1930s, the Federal Government stepped in with unprecedented amounts of money to help support state education programs and local school districts. In Minnesota this money came by way of state-stabilization monies that replaced cuts in state aid, supplementary money for special education and supplementary money for Title I programs. While the money was needed, we also have come to realize that a greater amount of regulation from the Federal Government was also to follow.

There is a quote that says, “With the king’s purse comes the king.”

As school districts and especially state departments of education become more reliant on Federal monies, the Federal Government has been able to tighten regulations on education. This is all done in the name of equity and in the name of increasing the proficiency of the education of our children. IDEA creates equal access for children with physical and mental disabilities but also over the years, especially through court judgments, the rules regarding special education have almost immobilized schools in terms of flexibility.

Eight years ago the No Child Left Behind Act was passed. Again, there was an infusion of money – especially for testing on a statewide basis – but there were also huge levels of regulation including Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and much reporting on the part of schools. The goal was to decrease the achievement gap between groups of students. Though there have been significant shifts in education programs and schools, this achievement gap still remains hard to close.

Next come the “Race To the Top” grants that will be granted first to some states and later as innovation grants to individual or groups of school districts. We have been reading the regulations and guidelines regarding these grants and find, while the Federal Government is liberal in its distribution of funding, the powers that are demanded over local school districts are significant.

In Race To the Top states must agree, prior to receiving a grant, that they will make several significant changes.

One of these changes is that states would have super levels of power to intervene in those schools that are doing the most poorly on their state tests. These 5% of the schools would equal about 120 schools in the state of Minnesota. Many of these schools are in the urban area, although some are in rural parts of Minnesota. The state would have the power to replace faculty, replace principals, or even to convert the school to a charter school. In some cases, these kinds of draconian changes are needed. In others, the results may not be positive.

It is interesting that originally the Constitution of the United States left the task of educating children to the states. In many states the only stipulation within the state constitution is that they have a responsibility for educating the children. Yet, as the Federal Government has moved to fill what are perceived voids in state education programs, over 40 years they have passed multiple Acts giving more students equal access to an education. More recently the Feds have begun to insist that every school and every state have their students become proficient as they go through school.

Only time will tell if the intrusion of Federal Government with both its money and its bureaucracy will turn out to be a positive direction for our country and for our children. There of course is great controversy around this subject, and many working in the schools are concerned about what seems to be the heavy hand of Federal Government regulation.



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# Continuous Improvement for Quality Schools

**W**e can agree that school leaders of today are facing unprecedented times. Leaders are expected to guide schools to improve student results for all students. As leaders embrace the challenge of improving student achievement, they are also required to manage stagnant and, often times, dwindling resources. The lack of resources has forced schools to seek additional resources to support the essential functions of the school district by conducting operating referendum campaigns. To add to the challenges, schools are facing increased competition for students through open enrollment and other choice options. These challenges are increasing the demands on leaders to ensure schools remain true to the core mission of student achievement while balancing the needs to support teacher quality and maintain constituent satisfaction.

As school leaders know, the quality of a school or district is defined by many key measures including student achievement. The quality of teachers, the satisfaction of parents and community members, and the degree of alignment within the school district – both horizontally within each grade level and vertically within the entire school system – are all key measures on the performance outcomes of the school organization.

As school district leaders have sought to lead improvement and manage change, school districts in Minnesota and across the United States have turned to a continuous improvement framework. The framework, called the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, has its foundation in continuous improvement. The criteria are aimed at helping school districts focus on those items that are most important, and focusing the district on improved performance results with each of those identified areas such as student achievement results, constituent satisfaction, and organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

While the Baldrige framework provides guidance for improvement, the framework is not prescriptive. Rather, the criteria support a systems approach to organization-wide goal alignment. The criteria supports a goal-based means to identify the effectiveness of the organization and to develop improvement plans based upon the identified areas. Every two years, the performance Criteria are updated based upon intensive research into organizations that have demonstrated extremely high levels of comparative performance and modified to reflect those requirements of excellence. As such, Arnie Weimerskirch, retired Vice President of Quality for Honeywell and former Chair of the Baldrige Panel of Judges



Klint Willert  
Superintendent  
Marshall

shared that the Criteria are said to reflect “the leading edge of validated management practices” – a set of best practices that any organization can gauge their own performance, identify and prioritize improvement opportunities, and better align resources to meet ever-changing stakeholder needs, environmental changes, and what’s truly important for future success.

Using the criteria school districts can conduct either formal or informal assessments to obtain feedback on organizational performance.

When utilizing the criteria to obtain feedback on the performance of the organization, the school district learns areas where improvement

can be made. This feedback provides an added level of focus to foster ongoing improvements. Additionally, the feedback provides opportunities to improve communications among exemplary organizations through the sharing of best practices. Finally, the feedback received through organizational assessments serves as a working tool for not only understanding current levels of performance based upon organizational priorities, but also for improving performance by guiding future planning and direction.

School districts that have successfully utilized the framework to drive performance excellence have documented performance results. To date, five school districts in the United States have been recognized with the National Malcolm Baldrige Award. The Chugach, AK district, a 2001 recipient, is comprised of approximately 220 students. They demonstrated outstanding gains in student achievement results by applying the criteria to align the district core curriculum to a standards-based educational approach. The result was that student performance on the California Achievement Test improved dramatically – in reading from the 28th percentile in 1995 to the 71st percentile in 1999; in math from the 54th percentile to the 78th percentile, and in language arts from the 26th percentile to the 72nd percentile. The Pearl River School District, a district of approximately 2,500 students in New York and a 2001 recipient, improved constituent satisfaction along with increased the number of those students graduating with a Regents diploma from 60 percent in 1996 to 86 percent in 2001. Community Consolidated School District 15 in Palatine, IL was a 2003 recipient. This district, serving a population of 12,390 students, which included 37.5 percent minority students, 32.5 percent at the low-income level, and approximately 32 percent of the students from non-English speaking backgrounds with 72 different languages, demonstrated improved achievement results as well. After an intentional

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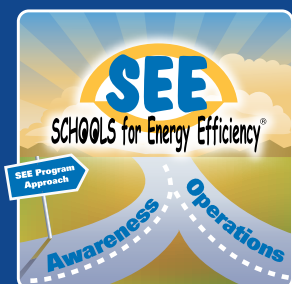


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# LEADER'S NOTES

## The TRA Retirement System Pension Funds Under Stress

Most pension funds in the United States, be they public or private, have been under stress in this last year because of the significant downturn in investments in the stock market. While the market has recovered somewhat, most of these funds are still struggling. This includes the Minnesota Teachers Retirement Fund.

The MASA Legislative Pensions and Contracts Sub-Committee has heard presentations from the Executive Director of TRA and have heard the projections for the future. Leaving the Fund as it is now, even with an extraordinary recovery of the stock market, will leave the pension fund nearly bankrupt in about 35 years. Every projection shows that there will be more money drawn out of the Fund than contributed to it. Thus we have to find some solutions and we need to do them sooner instead of later.

The MASA Legislative Pensions and Contracts Sub-Committee is recommending the following:

1. That a contribution increase be made by the State of Minnesota into the TRA Fund immediately.
2. That the employer contributions to TRA be increased systemically over several years until the Fund comes back to sustainability.
3. That employee contributions to the pension fund also be increased systemically over several years until the Fund comes back to sustainability.
4. That inflationary increases now allowed within the pension fund for retirees be suspended for at least two years.
5. That the ongoing increases in contributions and the limitation on retiree benefits be ended upon the Fund reaching sustainability.



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators

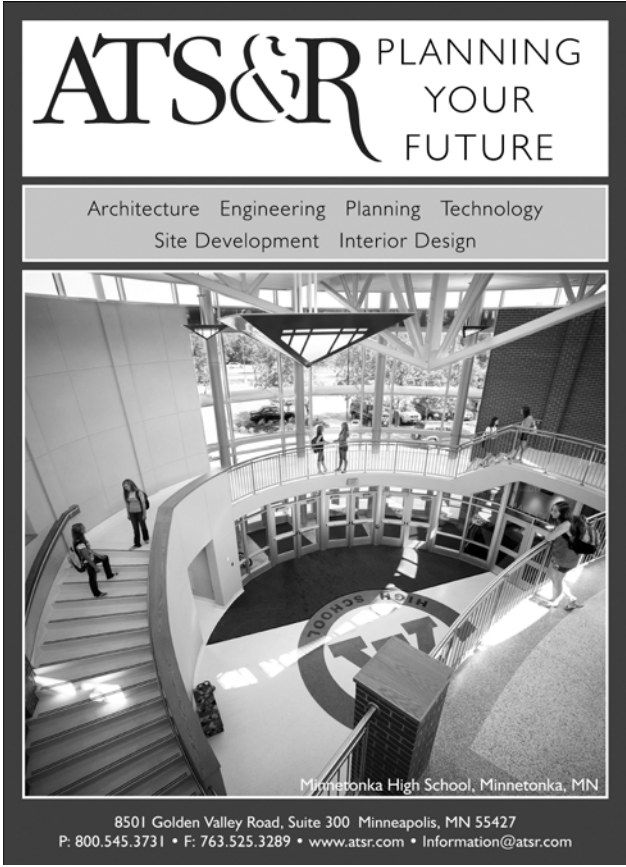
The purpose of these recommendations is to have all parties invest in helping the Teachers Retirement Fund become whole – the State of Minnesota, school districts, educators, and retirees. We also see urgency in doing this as the sooner we correct the problem, the sooner we can get the Fund back to a fully funded level. Then once again we can look at the possibility of enhanced retirement possibilities for our active employees. This especially includes those employees who started to work after 1989 and at this time do not have a smooth retirement path in front of them.

The Minnesota State Legislature has a pension commission of which five members come from the Senate and five from the House of Representatives. It is this group of ten people who will be wrestling with this problem in the 2010 Legislative Session. We are hoping that many of the other education organizations adopt positions similar to that adopted by MASA so that we can have the political wherewithal to get this pension system fixed once and for all.



**Happy Holidays**

The Staff of MASA wish you and your family a safe and Happy Holiday Season!



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# The Learning Wall Can Brain Development Help Us Break Through?

by Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators

**F**or the last 8 to 10 years, schools and teachers in Minnesota have become significantly more sophisticated in educating students. Standards are now in place and understood. Data is being used widely. And we are understanding, especially at the elementary school level to apply a solid curricular learning approach and yet recognizing it will only work for seventy to eighty percent of the children. Thus, teachers are learning how to try other interventions so that other students can continue to learn.

At the secondary levels of our schools, we have ramped up our rigor considerably and students are expected to be more proficient in many areas. A huge number of students are engaging in college-level courses while they are still in high school.

However, even we as we are applying all of these advanced techniques we are still finding that we are running up against a wall. The achievement gap persists and we have had only marginal success in trying to close it. Thus it begs the question, "Is there something else to help our students, especially those with less opportunity early in their lives?"

One promising area is the advance being made in brain research. We are beginning to understand how the brain learns and how even the IQ of young children can be enhanced with certain brain development techniques. This is an area our members should begin to study and to become more conversant in.

There are several companies, one of which is Scientific Learning, that have developed programs that can be used for preschool and primary aged children to help increase these student's brain capacity. Schools using this technique are utilizing Title I funds and are seeing reasonable success. One of these school districts is Davenport, Iowa. It is now being lead by former Duluth Superintendent, Julio Almanza. They are providing a brain development treatment to many of their young students and are finding exceptional gains on these students' test scores.

I've recently become aware that a number of school districts in Minnesota are utilizing the concept of "smart classrooms" in their primary grades to help students learn. Brain research tells us that if you can connect basic academic learning with physical movement, students learn better. Thus, smart classrooms have things like small monkey bars

in them, hopscotch patterns on the floor and other ways by which students can do rhythmic movements while they are learning their ABCs and their numbers. The combination of physical activity along with learning seems to help these students connect much quicker to the concepts of academic learning.

We are aware of several schools using smart classrooms, including Richfield, Fergus Falls and East Grand Forks. We believe quite a number of other school districts are applying brain development techniques as well. MASA, in encouraging professional development on newly developing areas, will be making grants of up to \$750 to each region if they are willing to invest these professional development monies to learn about brain research and the techniques of expanding children's learning capacity that help students to learn better during their formative years.

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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](http://www.mnasa.org)).

Nominations are due by January 29, 2010.



# RICHARD GREEN SCHOLAR

## Jay Haugen is MASA's 2009 Richard Green Scholar

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Mr. Jay Haugen, Superintendent of the West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Schools, as its 2009 Richard Green Scholar. Mr. Haugen presented his research, *"Clear Goals and Transparent Accountability: A Public Campaign for School Improvement"* on Tuesday, September 29 at MASA's annual statewide convention of school administrators.

MASA, with the support of Cuningham Group Architecture, established the Richard Green Scholars Program in 2006 to honor the scholarly work and professional development of Minnesota school leaders.

The program is an annual recognition of the research, writing, and presentation of a paper reflecting the practice of excellent school leadership. Scholar candidates apply for the program and a subcommittee of the MASA Executive Development Committee selects the recipient.

"This is a great honor," says Mr. Haugen, "I look forward to sharing with my colleagues the work we have done, increasing our capacity to change by engaging our community. For if your community knows, understands, values and desires the change you seek, change becomes not a hard thing to do, but the only thing you can do."

Former recipients are:

2006: Dr. Diane J. Rauschenfels, Superintendent, Proctor Schools, for her research, *"Promoting Ethical Educational Leadership."*

2007: Dr. Mark Wolak, Superintendent, Mahtomedi Schools, for his study, *"Advancing Professional Practice for School Superintendents: Linking Effective Research with Effective Implementation."*

2008: Dr. Karen Orcutt, Superintendent, Orono Schools, for her research *"Characteristics of Resiliency in Leadership: Implications for Personal and Organizational Coping and Adapting Abilities."*

"MASA members value life-long learning," says MASA Executive Director Charlie Kyte, "and a critical focus for us as a professional association is the promotion of personal and professional development. Our goal is to support a professional learning community that inspires critical thinking and assessment of practice, and to recognize the importance of collegial relationships in professional development."

The *Richard Green Scholars Program* was named to honor

former Minneapolis Superintendent Richard R. Green, who modeled innovation and distinction in the child-centered practice of exemplary school leadership.



The program is sponsored by MASA's business partner member, Cuningham Group Architecture. "The Richard Green Scholarship provides a great opportunity for school leaders to explore the role of leadership in the public realm," says Cuningham President Tim Dufault. "This scholarly research is changing how we lead our schools, creating a new generation of effective leaders and giving them new tools to lead their communities. Cuningham Group Architecture, P.A., is proud to

sponsor this valuable program, giving Minnesota school leaders the opportunity to build their capacity as stewards of public resources and, most importantly, our children."

Information about the scholars program and copies of the research papers are available online at <http://www.mnasa.org/RGreenScholar.htm>.



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# POLARIS AWARD

## Greg Vandal is 2009 MASA Polaris Leadership Award Recipient

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), with the support of Ehlers and Associates, Inc., is pleased to announce that Dr. Gregory Vandal, Superintendent for Sauk Rapids-Rice School District, is the recipient of the 2009 Polaris Leadership Award.

The Polaris Leadership Award is presented each fall to recognize exemplary school leadership of a MASA member with twenty or more years of administrative experience. Polaris the “North Star,” is constant and unmoving in the sky. A navigator’s benchmark, the star marks “true north,” the fundamental direction that defines east, west, and south.

MASA Polaris Leadership Award nominees are evaluated on how each candidate demonstrates:

- Professional courage leading positive change
- Creation of a legacy of excellent leadership
- A lifelong career contribution of commitment to excellence on behalf of all students
- Exemplifying positive reasons that a person would choose to practice
- Fostering innovation and ideas that make a difference for students and the school community
- A lifetime of balanced achievement inside and outside of education
- Contribution to the practice of educational leadership through example and mentoring
- Exemplary conduct reflecting integrity and bearing emulation
- Significant tenure in each position to support district vision and affect positive change

Dr. Vandal was selected for this honor by a committee of MASA past presidents.

For over thirty years, Greg Vandal has been leading, supporting, and inspiring people to help kids be successful. He has been a speech and English teacher, a secondary school principal, and superintendent, first for the Eden Valley-Watkins Public Schools and currently for the Sauk Rapids-Rice Public Schools, where he has served since 1995. Greg is known for his exemplary ability to facilitate group process. As leader and state spokesperson for PS Minnesota, Greg has led the group from a small

discussion into an initiative involving nearly every educational association in Minnesota and inspiring the New Minnesota Miracle legislation to reform education funding. Greg has built a career infrastructure of strategic thinking, organizational spirit, and ethical leadership that has been a model for his peers and for many emerging leaders. Greg is a past Minnesota Superintendent of the Year (1998), and served as MASA President in 2000-01. In addition, he has held leadership roles in numerous state education, commercial, and service organizations, including the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, United Way of



Central Minnesota, and the Central Minnesota Community Foundation.

Dr. Vandal is greatly admired for his ability to bring together individuals of diverse and often competing interests to help form in those people a resolve to engage in action devoted to the common good. This has benefitted his districts, as well as the wider community. Several disaster response initiatives, including Central Minnesotans for Flood Relief, the Hattiesburg Community Partnership, and most recently the United Way Volunteer Engagement Initiative have been formed with Greg’s leadership. Over a thousand volunteers from Central Minnesota have provided countless hours of assistance to others as a result of Greg’s skills as a facilitator, organizer, and community builder.

“It is my great privilege and honor to serve the good people of the Sauk Rapids-Rice Public School,” says Dr. Vandal, “This is a place where students in our PK - 12 program are supported by fine families and an outstanding staff. Everyone here is committed to the lifelong learning, general wellness, and overall happiness of all who we serve. Students of every age are nurtured in the essentials of quality instruction, constant caring, and positive spirit. No matter the challenge, we have the talent and the resiliency in the school system, as in the broader community, to maintain our focus on success.”

Dr. Vandal holds a doctorate from the University of Minnesota, master’s and education specialist’s degrees from St. Cloud State University, and a bachelor’s degree from North Dakota State University. He has served as an adjunct faculty member for the education administration program at St. Cloud State University for much of the past three decades. He makes his home with wife Jan in Sauk Rapids where he remains active in church and community leadership.

# A Technology Day - Just for Superintendents

**K**eeping up with the constant changes in technology is a challenge. To help superintendents stay abreast of current trends and determine a technology vision for the future, TIES is bringing superintendents from around the state to spend a day learning and discussing the potential of technology. At our conference, “Empowering 21st-Century Learning in a Digital Age: Innovative. Personal. Participatory.” TIES is holding a strand just for superintendents on December 14.

More than 70 superintendents have registered and at the conference will meet with Michael Horn, co-author of *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, which



TIES Education Technology Conference  
Dec 12-15, 2009 | Minneapolis Hyatt  
[www.ties.k12.mn.us](http://www.ties.k12.mn.us)

discusses how online learning can be used in public schools to meet the unique learning styles and needs of individual students.

Registrants will receive a copy of Horn’s book and an iPod Touch and learn how to use it. They will gain personal 21st-century skills and see for themselves in hands-on sessions what it’s like to be in a tech-infused class. Superintendents will also share best practices for personalized learning in the Mounds View School District and hear about Bloomington’s success with online hybrid classes.

For more information about this conference, link to [www.ties.k12.mn.us](http://www.ties.k12.mn.us).



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## Negotiations Continued from Page 10

bargaining agreement, it is usually there forever unless the employer pays dearly to remove it. Many times, saying “NO” to more time off proposals and not settling a contract, or giving a small salary increase, may be preferable to giving teachers more time off.

- 4. School Boards Public Communications:** School boards are publicly communicating the parties’ proposals to the public earlier, more frequently and in greater detail. They are doing so as part of their overall negotiating strategy. In “normal” rounds of negotiations, districts often conclude negotiations without any public comments to the public, employees and media; they report only the final settlement after ratification. More school districts are “going public” with the parties’ proposals earlier in the negotiations process during the 2009-2011 round of bargaining. I have heard from several school board members and administrators that having the public and the teachers informed of the status of proposals results in greater understanding and support of the school board proposals, and places more pressure on the teachers’ negotiations committee to settle.

PELRA requires that the union and employer must negotiate in good faith only with the other party’s designated representatives. It is not an unfair labor practice for an employer to communicate accurate information about the parties’ proposals to employees

and the public; however, school districts should communicate strategically and seek legal advice if there is any question about the legality of the communications.

- 5. Proposals to Modify Salary Schedule:** Teacher negotiations committees are proposing to make changes in the structure of the salary schedules (i.e., collapsing steps, adding an additional step above the top step, adding longevity increases) in order to increase teacher pay during the 2009-2011 contract. These proposals may be a reasonable and even cost-effective way to help settle the 2009-2011 contract. However, the cost of such modifications may have an adverse economical effect on the district’s finances for many years beyond 2011, known as the “tail.” The total cost and percentage of any of these changes to the salary schedule for 2009-2011 are important to the teachers, the school board and the public. But school boards should analyze the cost of “tail” in evaluating any proposal to modify the structure of the salary schedule.

As this article goes to press, the Minnesota Management and Budget November Forecast is projecting a state budget deficit of \$1.203 billion for the FY 2010-2011. The harsh reality is that negotiations of the 2009-2011 teacher master agreements and all other school district collective bargaining agreements will be increasingly difficult.

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.

## Continuous Improvement Continued from Page 14

approach applying the Baldrige framework, during the 2002-03 school year, 84 percent of CCSD’s second grade students were reading at or above grade level, nearly 35 percentage points above the national average. Jenks, OK Public Schools, a district of 9,270 students and a 2005 recipient, applied the criteria to improve organizational focus and alignment, resulting in improved advanced placement results. Thirty-seven percent of the district’s class of 2004 demonstrated college-level mastery by earning an AP test score of three or better, compared to the national percentage of 13 percent. Finally, Iredell-Statesville School District, a district of 20,900 students in southwestern North Carolina demonstrated improvement in student achievement performance. Although its per-pupil operations expenditures stand among the lowest in North Carolina, the district is currently ranked academically in the state’s top 10 school systems. These are just small reflections on how the Baldrige Criteria has helped leaders guide performance and organizational results.

Like several other school districts in Minnesota, Marshall Public Schools is on our own journey and pursuit of excellence. By applying the criteria, we have improved our organizational focus, leading to improved organizational

results in key measure of student achievement, constituent satisfaction, organizational alignment, staff quality, and fiscal accountability. The framework serves as an important tool to guide our improvements through ongoing, embedded continuous improvement.

Max DuPree, a leading authority on organizational leadership, once shared, “We cannot become what we want to be by remaining what we are.” By applying a continuous improvement model, such as the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, school and district leaders can provide both the necessary leadership to guide improvement and the support to manage the change necessary to support the school district in meeting student achievement goals and other key improvement measures of organizational quality. Nothing is more essential in a time of accountability and limited resources.

School leaders can learn more about the continuous improvement process and the Baldrige criteria through such organizations as the Minnesota Council for Quality ([www.councilforquality.org](http://www.councilforquality.org)), the American Society for Quality ([www.asq.org](http://www.asq.org)), or the Baldrige National Quality Award Program ([www.baldrige.nist.gov/Criteria.htm](http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/Criteria.htm)).





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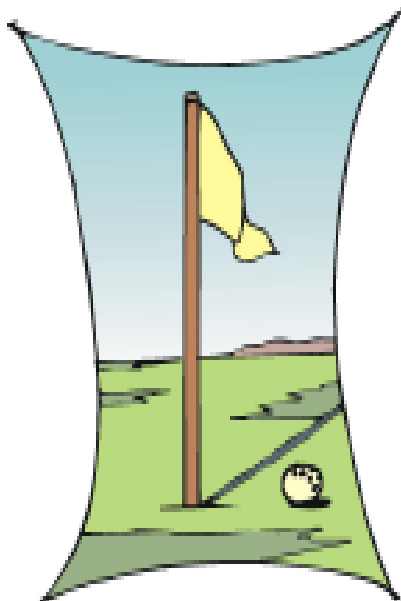
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## Thank You Golf Tournament Sponsors

The MASA Foundation Golf Tournament at Fall Conference was a great success, thanks to the following sponsors . . .



*The MASA Foundation thanks the following contributors for their support.*

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# MASA Jobsite Creators Honored

In the late 90's, a number of MASA members came to the Association with a request to develop a way to integrate and manage job postings and applications. In the "old days," districts may have used an application service, such as the one then hosted by TIES, or managed the process themselves. Both options involved large quantities of paper moving among district offices and school buildings, and it was difficult to manage a review process that could be very cumbersome. At the time, few internet resources were available to help streamline the process, and MASA soon discovered that there were not many organizations that wanted to sign up to design, build, and maintain a framework for this service. Thus, at the request of MASA members, the MASA Jobsite was born.



Dennis Rens & Fred Kunze

leaving it in the capable hands of Jeanna Quinn in the MASA office. Dennis and Fred engineered the design, worked out the bugs, coached the users, and promoted the best practice of site use. They carted laptops on family vacations to maintain contact with users. They staffed many trade shows, demonstrated the site to countless young teachers, and constantly audited data for accuracy. The Jobsite "brand" is one of exemplary service and results, and that is because of Dennis and Fred.

The MASA Board of Directors commended Dennis and Fred at their December meeting for their leadership and service, and for their innovative contribution to the practice of school administration.

At first, the site hosted only job postings, but we soon discovered that districts and applicants also valued having an online method of applying for jobs, and an applicant site was added. In the following ten years, the MASA Jobsite Online has become the premier online resource for employment in Minnesota Schools. This of course was due to the good work of a number of people, but the heart and soul of this initiative came from Dennis Rens and Fred Kunze.

During the last year, Fred and Dennis have been training and mentoring Jeanna Quinn and the rest of the MASA staff to continue this tradition of high quality service, and while it is always difficult to say goodbye to friends, we pledge that our Jobsite clients will experience consistent service and support—probably not the same great corny jokes or golf advice at the conferences, but some things just can't be duplicated.

Thanks, Dennis and Fred!

This fall, Dennis and Fred are finishing their work with the Jobsite and

**2010 Officer Nominations Coming Soon!**  
 MASA annual elections are just around the corner.  
 Watch your e-mail for Officer and Board of Director's nomination forms.

## At Ruth's Table

an annual conversation among practicing and aspiring education leaders who are women

a partnership of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators and Minnesota State University Mankato, Department of Educational Leadership

**Join us on Wednesday, March 17, 2010**  
 from 1 - 4 pm  
 at the Northland Inn in Brooklyn Park, MN  
 for our first annual "At Ruth's Table" conversation. This is an opportunity for education leaders who are women to gather for learning, networking, and idea sharing. Each practicing education leader is encouraged to bring a guest who is a woman considering a career in education leadership. Guests attend without cost.

Let's build our community of women who are excellent education leaders. Save the date and watch for the registration materials.

*"Conversation is how people think together."*  
 — M. Wheatley

Ruth Randall was Minnesota's first female Commissioner of Education, appointed by Governor Rudy Perpich in 1983. This event is named in her honor.



## Plan to attend the 2010 MASA/ MASE Spring Conference!

Thursday - Friday, March 18-19 at the  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park, MN

This year's conference will feature leaders linking current research and best practices. Join us and learn from our speakers and one another as we explore how **leadership makes a world of difference!** Our presenters include...

**Tony Wagner** has worked for more than thirty-five years in the field of school improvement, and he is a frequent keynote speaker and widely published author on education and society. Prior to assuming his current position at Harvard, Tony was a high school teacher for twelve years; a school principal; a university professor in teacher education; co-founder and first executive director of Educators for Social Responsibility; project director for the Public Agenda Foundation in New York; and President and CEO of the Institute for Responsive Education. He earned his a Masters of Arts in Teaching and Doctorate in Education at Harvard University. Tony's latest book, *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need - and What We Can do About It* has just been published by Basic Books.

**William Damon** is Director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence and Professor of Education at Stanford University. Damon's current research explores how young people develop purpose in their work, family, and community relationships. He examines how people can learn to approach their careers with a focus on purpose, imagination, and high standards of excellence. Damon also has written widely about how to educate for moral and ethical understanding. Damon's work is being used in professional training programs in the fields of journalism, law, and business, as well as in character education programs at the pre-collegiate level. Damon's most recent book is *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life* (2008).

Reality check! How does what we are learning at this conference translate into "real life" back at the district? How can we bridge research to practice given the climate in which we currently work? Join **Greg Vandal** as he sets the stage for our **afternoon discussion groups**.

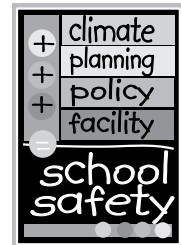
How does Public Participation contribute to innovative practice in our schools? What is the difference between Public Participation and Community Relations? How are leaders using processes of Public Participation to bolster student success? Our Public Participation Guide will be **Deb Gurke**, Governance Consultant for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. Deb has had over 15 years of experience in public education in Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin including service on the Stillwater, MN board of education. She has a Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she studied school organizations, specifically the role the community plays in policy decisions.

Each year, *Time Magazine* names the "50 Best Inventions" of the year. In 2009, for the first time, Time honored a public school initiative with this distinction. Join us and hear about how New York City's **School of One** is teaching in a way that no traditional classroom can, because it tailors each lesson to a student's strengths, challenges, interests, and progress, using technology and a unique and flexible learning environment.

**Mark your calendar and plan to attend the Spring Conference!**

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# School Finance Elections: A Comprehensive Planning Model for Success

Comments by Daniel A. Domenech, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators

*"Executing a successful school finance election can be one of the most important – yet also one of the most difficult – responsibilities a school system leader faces... Whether a school finance election involves a vote on a tax levy or a school bond measure, effective leadership is essential to winning. In School Finance Elections: A Comprehensive Planning Model for Success, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Lifto and Senden provide a recipe for success. They offer practical, research-based advice for preparing for an election campaign, anticipating potential challenges and managing the process for a successful outcome... With such little room for error, anyone involved in planning and conducting a school finance election should read this book carefully."*

**School Finance Elections: A Comprehensive Planning Model for Success** is a workshop based on the book of the same title authored by our presenters. The workshop's content represents a marriage of research and successful practice, emphasizing systems and strategies rather than specific campaign tactics and allowing school leaders to elevate their thinking to a more comprehensive and long-range vision of election planning.

**Presenters**  
**Dr. Don Lifto**  
Senior Vice President, Springsted, Inc.

**Dr. Brad Senden**  
The Center for Community Opinion and Political Designs

Drs. Lifto and Senden have consulted with dozens of school districts running operating and bond elections from New Jersey to California. They are frequent presenters at national conferences including AASA, NSBA, and ASBO. Their articles have appeared in many national publications.

### Who Will Benefit?

This workshop will be beneficial to school districts planning an initial bond or operating levy—or to those coming back for another try after a lost election. It will also feature invaluable lessons from a superintendent experienced in preparing for and conducting a school finance election.

### Cost

MASA Members: \$99  
Nonmembers attending in a team (same school district) with an MASA Member: \$99

Nonmembers NOT attending with an MASA Member: \$149

*Based on past workshops, registering a district team is highly recommended to ensure a common understanding.* Registration includes the program, lunch, breaks, materials, and one copy of *School Finance Elections* per district team.

More Info:  
MASA  
651-645-6272,  
866-444-5251,  
or  
members@  
mnasa.org

Cancellations made before or on January 21 will be charged a \$20 cancellation fee. No refunds for cancellations made after January 21, 2010. No-shows will be billed.

**Registration Form - Choice of Two Dates / Locations**  
**IMPORTANT - Please Check the Session You Wish to Attend:**  
(Please register for either location by Friday, January 22.)

**St. Cloud (Resource Training & Solutions)**  
**Date • Time:** Thursday, January 28, 2010 • 9:30 am - 4 pm  
Registration begins at 9:15 am.

**Location:** Resource Training & Solutions  
4150 2nd Street South, Suite 550  
St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301  
320-255-3236

**Directions:** <http://www.resourcetraining.com>

OR ...

**Saint Paul (MASA)**  
**Date • Time:** Friday, January 29, 2010 • 9:30 am - 4 pm  
Registration begins at 9:15 am.

**Location:** Minnesota Association of School Administrators  
1884 Como Avenue  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108

**Directions:** <http://www.mnasa.org>

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## 2009... December

**18**  
Nominating Committee Meeting  
11 am-1 pm  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

**24 - 25, and 31**  
Winter Holidays  
MASA Offices Closed

## 2010... January

**1**  
Winter Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

**5**  
Foundation Meeting  
11 am-1 pm  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

**13**  
Great Start Workshop IV  
Hilton Downtown, Minneapolis

**13**  
New Stages for Sages - RESCHEDULED  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

**13**  
Annual Women Leaders Reception  
4-5:30 pm  
Hilton Downtown, Minneapolis

**14-15**  
MSBA Winter Convention  
Minneapolis Convention Center,  
Minneapolis

**19**  
Minnesota Superintendent of the Year  
Celebration for Patty Phillips  
North St. Paul High School,  
North St. Paul

## February

**4**  
Minnesota Legislature Begins

**11-14**  
AASA National Convention  
Phoenix, AZ

**15**  
Newsletter Submissions Due

**24-25**  
Minnesota School Safety Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

## March

**17**  
Great Start Workshop V  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
Executive Committee Meeting  
9 - 10:45 am

Board of Directors Meeting  
11 am - 4 pm  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
At Ruth's Table

Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park  
Past President & Board of Directors Dinner  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**18-19**  
MASA & MASE Spring Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**25**  
Emerging Leaders Conference  
TIES, St. Paul

## April

**2**  
Spring Holiday

**14**  
New Stages for Sages Workshop  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

**22**  
Foundation Meeting  
11 am-1 pm  
MASA Offices, St. Paul

## May

**14**  
Newsletter Submissions Due

**31**  
Memorial Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

## June

**17-18**  
Board of Directors Retreat  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

## August

**4**  
MDE Back-to-School Superintendents'  
Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

**5-6**  
MSBA Summer Seminar  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

## October

**3-5**  
MASA Fall Conference  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd



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**Back-to-School  
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**2010 Back-to-School  
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**Wednesday, August 4** *(note the earlier date)*

**Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park, MN**

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