

Leaders FORUM

Spring 2011
What's Inside

Planning for a Successful Executive Director Transition

As I write this article, we are in the process of identifying a candidate for the position of Executive Director of MASA and of implementing our plan for a successful transfer of leadership for our organization. I would like to highlight three key elements of our “transition plan.”

First and foremost, the MASA Board of Directors has spent considerable time in preparing to hire a new executive director. Board members and officers have:

1. Developed a timeline for hiring the new director;
2. Created a profile for the next director;
3. Crafted a set of questions to be asked of candidates for the position; and
4. Identified interview teams and an interview process geared to select the “best” candidate for the position.



Jeff Olson
St. Peter Public Schools
Superintendent
MASA President

Second, attention will be given to having a positive ending to the leadership Charlie Kyte has given to the organization. Charlie has done a great job in leading MASA over the last eleven years and we want to honor his leadership and his legacy as our executive director. MASA officers and the MASA Board will be notifying you of our specific plans as we get closer to Charlie’s retirement date of October 1, 2011.

Finally, we will be paying special attention to having a successful and productive start for our new executive director. If things work out as planned, we will introduce our new director at the MASA Spring Conference. We will also engage the full MASA Board of Directors in working with the director to set first-year performance priorities and in developing the strategic goals we hope to accomplish as an organization.

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LEADER'S NOTES

Reconsidering the 4-day School Week

Over the past two years I have been very skeptical of school districts moving to a four-day student week as a way of saving some money in these difficult budget times. However, my opinion is changing based upon a meeting with the ten superintendents of the school districts that have already made this change. There may actually be some innovation and educational opportunity in what first looked like only a cost saving move.

I met with this group of superintendents during the MSBA Winter Convention. Most of the school districts are smaller in size. Initially the move to a four-day week was made to save some money on transportation. The school districts are reporting a savings that could be the equivalent of about two teachers' salaries each year.

Typically, the school districts that have converted to the four-day week run their schools from Tuesday thru Friday. The student classroom time during these remaining four days of the week is longer so that the students do not lose instructional time on a weekly basis. The teacher and employee day is somewhat longer as well, although in some cases not proportionately so and here lies a bit of the magic.

By lengthening the student day but not the employee day quite as much, the time that the staff typically utilize before



Charlie Kyte
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of
School Administrators

the student attendance day begins and after the student attendance day ends has not been expanded. This time in turn can be "banked" to be used for staff development and other activities on a periodic basis on the now vacant Mondays.

A couple of the school districts have their staff coming in for professional development one Monday a month. This then eliminates all of those late starts, early dismissals and frantic faculty meetings at the end of the school day. Rather, the staff utilizes some of the time saved by coming in once a month for a more organized period of time that can be better utilized by everyone.

Other school districts bring their administrative team in one other Monday a month for extended professional development and administrative planning time. By significantly reducing interruptions to the school day that are so prevalent in the five-day per week schedule, parents and students can virtually be guaranteed a four-day, uninterrupted learning period each week.

But the good ideas do not stop here. Some of the schools have reconfigured their staff allocations or utilized extra money from various grants and categorical funds to bring some teachers and students with remedial

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Associate for Leadership Support

Aimee Ranallo
MASA, 1884 Como Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108
(651) 645-6272
(866) 444-5251
FAX (651) 645-7518
aranallo@mnaasa.org

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4-day School Week... Continued from Page 2

needs in every other Monday so that these students can catch up on their learning. Other schools are bringing in their advanced students for special studies on those Mondays. Finally, some of the schools are utilizing a single instructor to open their shop areas or their science lab areas so that students can come in and work independently on their shop projects and science experiments.

The schools that are now utilizing the four-day week have surveyed their constituents to get an idea of how they are adjusting to the change. Overall, students and parents have been indicating a favorable response to the four-day week. Teachers have reported favorably as well, although that they do indicate that they are experiencing fatigue when they are teaching nonstop in these longer days. Most of the schools have provided childcare on Monday when students are not in school, but have found that very few parents have taken advantage of it. It seems that parents have made other arrangements for childcare where necessary.

While not surveyed or measured, the superintendents are reporting that secondary level students are acting more responsibly in terms of the management of their time. The four-day week requires that students plan more and actually schedule some of their time (the Mondays) on their own. As a result older students begin the transition to a less regimented post secondary life that many of them will become engaged in after graduation.

As I have thought more about the four-day week it seems that this innovation, if well thought out and well structured, possibly along with a move toward an extended school year could be a real winner. Think about a year around schedule based on a 4-day week with adequate time for advanced and remedial instruction. It's an innovation worth exploring, especially if a school district could utilize the money saved on transportation, building cleaning, lunches, etc. and put that money into extended opportunities for students on the fifth day of the week.

I am glad I had the chance to participate in this meeting with the four-day school week superintendents. They helped to enlighten me and change my attitude somewhat about this innovation in student scheduling. The final test of a four-day week will come from the results we see on student academic performance. It will take a several years to accurately gage if students are doing as well, better, or not as well in the four-day week compared to the five-day school week.

Successful Executive Director Transition... Continued from Page 1

In the end, our goal is to have a successful transition to the new head of our organization and to empower this person to continue to have MASA be:

1. A voice for schools and MASA members;
2. A quality membership service organization; and
3. The leading educational organization in the state of Minnesota.

Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have, jolson@stpeterschools.org

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Charlie's Typepad Blog: Voice of MN Education

The *Leaders Forum* is your newsletter and we welcome your input. Please send your ideas or articles to Aimee Ranallo at aranallo@mnasa.org.

POINT OF VIEW

Scott Staska's Reflections on his Superintendent of the Year Honor

Many of my friends have told me I am crazy. I thoroughly enjoy the job application and interview process. I like considering positions, thinking through the application process, and even going through the interview experience itself. I especially like the process when I am not worried or concerned about the outcome! What I don't like, however, is that there always has to be a decision—someone gets selected for the position.

The interview process is a wonderful opportunity to gather thoughts, become focused on issues of excellence, to share thoughts with others, and to learn about what works and succeeds in other schools. From my perspective, the application and interview process is always a great learning experience. Although I love the interview process, there is always a “danger” that someone on the other side of the table will like what they hear and actually offer a position.

When the chair of the ROCORI School Board announced, last summer at one of our regular meetings, that the board submitted my name in nomination for the Superintendent of the Year program, I was honored, yet incredibly humbled. Nomination by the board was a wonderful indication of support for the work that is being done in the ROCORI Schools, but our work is not a great deal different than the work going on in schools across Minnesota.

After the meeting, I took some time to look through the application materials more carefully. In many ways, the Superintendent of the Year process is similar to a job interview. An application must be developed and submitted. Since I enjoy the application and interview process, it seemed like the Superintendent of the Year application would be a great opportunity to focus thoughts and direction. Working through the application is a great time of assessment, evaluation and focus.



Scott Staska
Superintendent
ROCORI Schools
2010 MN SOY Recipient

I could share thoughts on what we were doing in ROCORI but I probably wouldn't have opportunity to learn about other schools. When you are not really worried about the outcome or the selection, the application process can be a great experience. What I didn't give a great deal of consideration was, like the interview process, the “danger” in being selected!

Given that I know there are many hard-working, dedicated and professional colleagues across the state, I was not too worried about my application being

selected. There are wonderful things being accomplished for students all across the state of Minnesota. We have great school districts with many excellent leaders—all doing their best for students in their communities.

As I was working at my desk one day in October, Barb Fuchs (District Office Administrative Assistant) asked if I was “able to take a call from Charlie Kyte.” After a brief pause, my response was, “sure.” The call was transferred in and the danger proved true; Charlie talked about a few items and said, “I am talking to the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.” Wow!

My initial thoughts as I hung up the phone went to a couple other people I know who were recipients of this recognition. As I moved into the St. Cloud area, Greg Vandal from Sauk Rapids-Rice and Kay Worner, formerly at Sartell-St. Stephen, had opened their knowledge, experience and insights to me. Both have been recognized as Minnesota Superintendent of the Year. I had to ask myself how anything I have done came even close to what I know they had accomplished in their careers.

My mind wandered to other peers and colleagues I know who have done incredible work in difficult and challenging circumstances. Many names of Stearns

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SOY Reflections...

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County colleagues raced through my mind—Bruce Watkins at St. Cloud, John Haas at Holdingford, Dan Brooks in Sauk Centre, Steve Dooley at Albany, Todd Burlingame at Paynesville, John Tritabaugh at Kimball, Larry Peterson at Eden Valley-Watkins and many others who currently or previously served in the St. Cloud region. Other than completing an application, what has been different at ROCORI than any of these other communities?

Across the state of Minnesota, I thought of many other colleagues—Jerry Ness at Fergus Falls, Scott Thielman at Buffalo, Bruce Novak at Cambridge-Isanti, Jeff Taylor in Ortonville, Rick Ellingworth at Redwood Falls, Jim Hess at Bemidji, Terry Quist in Alexandria, Dan Hoverman at Mounds View, Loy Woelber at Westbrook-Walnut Grove, Mark Bezek at Elk River, Deb Henton in North Branch, and, again, a number of other superintendents across the state. Each of these superintendents works hard within their district, offers great leadership to their school, and has accomplished a great deal in their work. How is my work any different than what each of these superintendents does?

Just as quickly, I considered some of the superintendents who are or have recently retired—Dwayne Strand, Dale Gasser, Fred Nolan, and Don Helmstetter, among others came to mind. Again, the question flashed through my mind—how is my work any different than what each of these leaders offered their districts?

As I consider the work of superintendents across Minnesota, the recognition of Superintendent of the Year continues to be overwhelming and humbling! I can readily attest to and acknowledge that the work of the superintendent is hard work. We are asked to provide leadership to our districts in so many different areas—financial, academic, personnel or human resources, facilities, community relations, public engagement, legislative influence, inspiration, governance, management, and others.

We are asked to model professionalism, commitment, dedication, and self-sacrifice. We are asked to be collaborators and build community while we also need to be decisive and make tough stands that may not be readily accepted.

We are asked to build teams and develop programs, yet hold individuals accountable. We are asked to be weather forecasters, economists, demographers, politicians, statisticians and communications specialists while serving as the lead educator for the district.

The AASA National Superintendent of the Year program, as described in the application packet, “pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead the nation’s public schools... This program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents.” Considering the work across the state of Minnesota, the many roles and responsibilities we hold, and the qualities of those who lead our schools, this recognition is very humbling and could readily be extended to everyone who serves in the position of superintendent.

It is a tremendous honor to be selected, yet it also makes me appreciate at an even greater level, the high standards of professionalism, dedication, commitment, and service that occurs in each of Minnesota’s school districts. It is a privilege to serve within an outstanding professional occupation and amongst peers and colleagues who offer so much.

As a word of encouragement and a thought to ponder, it is important (in our roles as school leaders) to consider the approach outlined by former Indianapolis Colts head coach Tony Dungy (Uncommon). He shared it this way: “A good coaching staff is made up of people who are willing to listen to others. If I had all the answers, there would be no point in surrounding myself with bright, creative coaches—and I’m sure the team ownership would be pleased with all the money they would save in salaries.

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Guessing about Legislative Action

It is always difficult to write about what the Legislature is doing when you have to write the article a full month before publication. I am writing this article in early February and you are reading it in mid-March. It causes me to be a prognosticator and by the time you are reading this, much of the information may be incorrect.

We are beginning to see a shift in early February from the formative days of the legislative session into a phase where the members have to come to grips with the hard realities that are in front of them. During January a lot of the hearings were informational and bounced around between a wide variety of topics.

However, by March, the Legislature and the Education Committees will begin to hone their work so that the bills coming out of the committees actually have a chance of passage at the legislative level and consideration by the Governor. We will see bills on the evaluation of educators, some changes in seniority and tenure laws, some roll back of mandates and possibly even a few changes to the PELRA law.

The big elephant in the room is the budget. As I write this article, the actual budget forecast, which comes out at the end of February, will not be known but you will know it as you read this article. The parameters of that budget shortfall are well known and it will fall upon both the Governor and the Legislature to decide what combination of changes will need to be made in order to bridge this budget shortfall.

There are three strategies regarding the budget that can be employed. One is to adopt some mechanism for the state to acquire new revenues. The second is to shift some of the responsibility of this budget into another year, thus, trying to solve the problem over four years rather than just two years. Third is cutting back on the size of the commitments that the state makes to the citizens of Minnesota and to the local



Charlie Kyte
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of School
Administrators

levels of government. This area of cutbacks will be a true battleground.

Once the Legislature understands the size of the budget reductions that need to be made, the majority caucuses of the Senate and the House will allocate the changes in budget to each of the divisions such as K-12 education, higher education, public safety, veterans affairs, etc. It is important that the committee chairs for K-12 education fight hard within the caucuses to have as favorable a consideration for public education as

possible.

Once the committees know their budget targets, they then need to make the adjustments necessary to balance their portion of the budget. It is likely if revenue and shifts are kept off the table, that these budget targets would indicate draconian changes to the funding of K-12 education. However, as March turns into April the alternatives of revenue enhancement and shifting of budget cuts will come into play in a more significant way. The actual outcome of what the Legislature passes may be less draconian than what is first seen in March.

One of the great unknowns will be the ability of a Republican led Legislature and a Democratic Governor to come together to create a budget solution. The proposals from the Governor and the proposals from the Legislature will surely be different. If they can negotiate a middle ground we would have a chance of finishing the legislative session on time by the end of May. If they cannot bring this together we face the specter of special sessions and even possibly a government shutdown as of July 1. No one really wants to see a shutdown happen and it would be a high stakes play for all sides in the debate. Thus, we will need to wait a bit longer as the legislative session comes to a close to determine if compromises can be reached or not.


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Legislative Action...
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In the meantime MASA will use all of its resources and abilities to persuade and help protect the funding for K-12 education. We will promote progressive changes to allow our school districts to survive and possibly even thrive in their operations as they deliver education to the children of the state.


You know it's spring
when you feel like
whistling even with a
shoe full of slush!
-Doug Larson

Happy Spring from the
Staff at MASA!



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ACHIEVING OUR CLIENTS' GOALS SINCE 1947

The Pupil Fair Dismissal Act: An Important Tool for Safe Schools

School districts throughout Minnesota are justifiably concerned about their responsibility to help keep children safe at school. The threat to student and staff safety often arises from the actions of students, not from those outside the school community. Unfortunately, the most effective way to deal with student misconduct that threatens school safety is suspension, expulsion or, in appropriate circumstances, an agreement in lieu of expulsion.

While the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act (“PFDA” or “Act”), Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40 to 121A.56, has been around since 1974, it still presents a few stumbling blocks for school districts. The PFDA provides for due process and equal protection for public school pupils who are facing any dismissal proceeding. When the statutory procedures are not met, school districts run the risk of having a hearing officer, the Department of Education, or a court reverse a school board dismissal action. This could result in sending a dangerous or violent student back to school.

Major areas that have caused problems include: (1) missing statutory timelines set forth in the Act; (2) failure to provide alternative educational services to the extent a student is suspended from school for more than five days; (3) providing a defective notice of intent to expel; and (4) failure to properly apply the PFDA to students with disabilities.

Statutory Timelines

The Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act contains a number of very important deadlines and timelines in which a district must take particular action or give particular notifications. The most critical are:

Suspension. Suspension is limited to removal from school for up to 10 consecutive school days, but a school may extend



Charles Long
Attorney
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered



Greg Madsen
Attorney
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

suspension for up to 15 school days when a student is proposed for expulsion or creates an immediate and substantial danger to himself or others. For special education students, the general rule is that “suspensions” may not exceed 10 cumulative school days during a school year. However, other means of changing a special education student’s attendance status may be available. To the extent that any student is removed from school for more than five consecutive school days, a school district must provide alternative educational services. In most cases, the type of alternative services are at the discretion of the school district but, for special education students, a district must provide special education services reflective of the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) and as developed or modified by the student’s individualized education program team.

Expulsion. Expulsion requires written notice, and the statute is very specific about what the notice shall contain. A hearing that “shall be conducted in a fair and impartial manner” must be scheduled within 10 days of the written notice. The hearing officer (usually an independent hearing officer retained by the school district) must make a recommendation

based “solely upon substantial evidence presented at hearing” and serve the recommendation within two days. The school board then must make its decision within five days after receipt of the hearing officer’s recommendation.

While it may initially appear that there is ample time to get everything done, these cumulative timelines can be deceiving. The 15-day time period means that from the first day of suspension to the day the school board acts, no more than 15 school days may have passed (10 school days for disabled students).

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Fair Dismissal Act... Continued from Page 8

Failure to Provide Alternative Educational Services During Suspension and After Expulsion

In Minnesota, unlike many states, expelled students remain entitled to an education from the expelling school district unless they enroll in another public school district or a non-public school. While the PFDA makes suggestions for alternative services, the school district has the discretion to select how it will provide these services. In most cases, home-bound instruction or placement at an alternative school are acceptable. The statute requires that the alternative educational services must be “selected to allow the pupil to progress toward meeting graduation standards.” For special education students, the district is obligated to provide services to the extent necessary to enable the student to progress in the general curriculum and to appropriately advance toward achieving goals and objectives on the student’s IEP.

Providing a Defective Notice of Intent to Expel

The Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act is very specific in articulating what needs to be included in an expulsion notice. The notice is to:

- a. be served upon the student and the student’s parent or guardian personally or by mail;
- b. contain a complete statement of facts, list of witnesses and a description of their testimony (all witnesses must be identified by name, and you must state what you expect the witness’ testimony will be);
- c. state the date, time and place of the hearing;
- d. be accompanied by a copy of the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act;
- e. describe what alternative educational services have been accorded the student in an attempt to avoid expulsion (not necessary when a single act of misconduct triggers the expulsion process); and
- f. inform the student, the parent or guardian of their right to:
 - have legal counsel or other representative at the hearing, and that free or low-cost legal assistance may be available and a resource list may be obtained from the Department of Education;
 - examine the pupil’s records;
 - present evidence; and
 - confront and cross-examine witnesses.

If a notice does not contain all these provisions, it is possible that a hearing officer, the Department of Education or a court could reverse an expulsion or exclusion because the notice denied the student due process.

A Minnesota Court of Appeals decision that upheld the Department of Education’s reversal of a school board’s expulsion decision illustrates the importance of a detailed notice of proposed expulsion that fully complies with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. In *In the Matter of the Expulsion of E.J.W. from Ind. Sch. Dist. No. 500*, the court held that the PFDA requires the disclosure of the names of all known witnesses to the incident forming the basis for the proposed suspension or expulsion. The court said it is not enough to identify only those individuals the school district intends to call as witnesses at hearing. The student in this case was expelled for his alleged involvement in making a bomb threat. Students who were interviewed by the police and school officials were not called to testify at E.J.W.’s expulsion hearing; only the police chief, a detective and the school principal testified about what they were told. No student witness was available for cross-examination. Consequently, the court determined both E.J.W.’s statutory and Constitutional rights to due process had been violated.

Failure to Properly Adhere to Pupil Fair Dismissal Act Procedures for Disabled Students

Children with disabilities may be excluded or expelled for misconduct that is not a manifestation of the pupil’s disability. However, the Act does require a few initial requirements be met before reaching that step.

Basic Rules of Discipline for Special Education Students

Generally, a school district cannot unilaterally change a special education student’s educational placement without parental consent. Further, a school district cannot expel for misconduct which is related to a student’s disability. Essentially, a change of placement or expulsion occurs if the student is suspended for more than 10 consecutive days or is suspended for a series of days that adds up to more than 10 school days in a school year in a manner that constitutes a pattern of removals.

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Tim Palmatier, tpalmatier@kennedy-graven.com
Susan E. Torgerson, storgerson@kennedy-graven.com
Maggie R. Wallner, mwallner@kennedy-graven.com

Real Estate & Business

Michael Norton, mnorton@kennedy-graven.com

Construction

Peter Mikhail, pmikhail@kennedy-graven.com
James M. Strommen, jastrommen@kennedy-graven.com

Finance and Bond

Stephen J. Bubul, sbubul@kennedy-graven.com
Martha Ingram, mingram@kennedy-graven.com
Andy Pratt, apratt@kennedy-graven.com

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PRIDE FUNDRAISING

Making Your Fundraiser Go Viral

Many schools are relying on fundraising, now more than ever, to bridge the gap between declining budgets and rising prices. The most successful fundraising solutions will allow schools to keep the majority of the profits, incorporate healthier choices and rely on the latest Internet technologies, such as web 2.0, to maximize proceeds.

The explosion of Web 2.0 has changed the face of fundraising forever. You are probably using this technology, right now, without even realizing it.

Web 2.0 refers to a user centric environment that facilitates the collaboration and sharing of information on the World Wide Web. You know it in everyday terms as social networking with applications like Facebook, Twitter, Digg or MySpace. As Web 2.0 has evolved, it has elevated the growing phenomenon of Viral Marketing. A message or idea can be spread instantly, much like a virus, to thousands of people with just a click of the mouse.

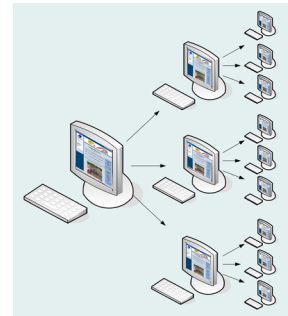
Healthier, more profitable fundraising events such as Fun Runs, Walk-a-thons and Bike-a-thons are the perfect vehicle for a viral campaign for several reasons:

1. Fundraising events are a healthy alternative to selling and delivering food and merchandise.
2. Event participants are simply seeking sponsorship for their participation in the event.
3. Entire families can participate in a day of outdoor activity.
4. Local business may support and participate in your event.

Making your fundraiser go viral is essential to the success of the campaign, and with the right partner, it can be easy to setup. Start by creating an event web page that promotes the details of your event and, most importantly, will accept on-line credit card donations. Be sure your web page incorporates social networking tools making it simple for participants to click and share the event web page with friends and family on their Facebook or Twitter. Lastly, create competition among your participants by offering contests and keeping track of on-line donations for each participant.

The viral nature of your event will unfold with a little help from you. Use event management tools to send emails to your participants or their parents. Include your event

webpage with each email and instruct parents to forward the page to at least 10 of their closest friends and family, requesting a donation. With 500 participants, your efforts may result in over 5,000 emails sent on behalf of your event. Also, provide instructions for participants and parents for sharing the event webpage on their social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter.



This type of viral marketing will also be appealing to local business sponsors that may benefit from a paid advertising spot on your event web page increasing their visibility and recognition within the community. Here are three great ways to recognize business sponsors on your event web page. Remember, their ad will be seen by thousands:

Good - List local business sponsors on your event website
Better - Create links to your business sponsors' web sites
Best - Link to online coupons to generate traffic to your business sponsors.

Lastly, be persistent. Don't be afraid to email your participants or their parents two or three times a week, reminding them of your event. Encourage them to take full advantage of the online donation tools via e-mail and through their social networking sites. It's a quick, simple and effective way to raise money for your event.

Healthier fundraising events along with evolution of Web 2.0 are changing the way schools, churches and communities think about fundraising. The Internet is a fantastic medium for sharing your fundraising campaign and generating community involvement. Encourage your participants to take full advantage of the available technology and maximize your proceeds for a successful fundraising campaign!

Get the technology, marketing materials and know-how for hosting healthier, more profitable fundraising events when you contact Pride Fundraising at www.PrideFundraising.com/Minnesota. MASA members save \$100 when you use promotion code "MASA".

Written by Shannon Goodwin, Pride Fundraising

FINANCIAL SURVIVAL

Better Yet

Improving Education in Difficult Times

On August 4, 2010, MASA kicked off Better Yet! Improving Education in Difficult Times with a panel of experts talking about the need for schools to be more effective and efficient. MASA members were encouraged to provide input and ideas. In October MASA conducted a member Zoomerang survey about schools becoming Better Yet in difficult times. In December a PowerPoint was provided to members to assist them in talking to staff and communities about the crisis public education is facing. Since the inception of Better Yet!, Minnesota's budget scenario has only gotten worse. Now, in January, 2011, there is a lot of "sail adjusting" to report. The following is a sampling of initiatives taking place throughout the state to make our schools more efficient and effective. Go to www.mnasa.org for more information on these initiatives.



Shari Prest
Ark Associates

effectiveness by pooling financial, human and intellectual resources to provide meaningful professional development opportunities; and align K-16 educational calendars across consortium districts and area postsecondary institutions.

Four-day School Week – North Branch Area Public Schools

According to Deb Henton, superintendent of North Branch Area Public Schools, after years of failed operating levy attempts, flat funding from the state, and two years of in-depth study on the four-day school week, she recommended to the school board that the four-day school week be implemented in North Branch Area Public Schools for the 2010-11 school year. The cost savings associated with the new schedule prevented the further reduction of teaching staff.

Teaming with Technology – Becker Public Schools

In 2009, Becker Public Schools passed a \$400,000-a-year technology levy. That money will allow the school district to equip each high school student and staff member with iPads. All students at other levels will have access to iPads. Superintendent Stephen Malone describes this cutting edge technology as "a way to enhance and accelerate learning" and allow kids to "tailor the speed, space and style in which they learn."

Technology Too – Southeast Services Cooperative

According to Kim Ross, distance learning facilitator for Southeast Minnesota Service Cooperative, the cooperative is serving member districts with a variety of online learning initiatives. Part of SSC's vision is to equip every member district teacher with his or her own Learning Management System (LMS). Teachers will not only be able to use the learning management system in their own classroom, but virtual Professional Learning Communities (PLC) shared virtual resources, shared staff development, and shared online courses will also be possible.

Flexible Learning Year (FLY) - 25 partner districts

The vision of the 25 partner FLY school districts is improved student achievement. Twenty-five partner districts have agreed upon three specific goals to make that vision a reality. Those goals are to increase the number of high-impact learning days by 7 to 10 days; improve teacher

Intermediate School District Collaborations

Intermediate districts 916, 917 and 287 have been exploring ways to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness within and among the intermediate districts. For example, Intermediate district 287 is working with other organizations to reduce drop-out and truancy rates in Hennepin County, and negotiate reduced rates from vendors and service providers.

Two School Districts with One Superintendent – Nashwauk-Keewatin and Greenway Public Schools

For over a year, Mark Adams has served as superintendent for two school districts, Nashwauk-Keewatin and Greenway Public Schools. He describes the experience as follows: "I have enjoyed the unique challenges of leading two school boards and helping bring two neighboring districts together. With the challenging fiscal situation we find ourselves in, the need for collaboration is critical to continuous student achievement improvements."

Three School Districts with One Superintendent – Southern Minnesota

Jerry Reshetar is superintendent of Lyle, Glenville-Emmons, and Grand Meadow school districts. Jerry has been the superintendent of the 230-student Lyle School District in southern Minnesota since 1999. Last year, the superintendents of nearby Glenville-Emmons and Grand

Continued on Page 13

Better Yet Continued from Page 12

Meadow towns left their positions for jobs elsewhere. Reshetar will fill both vacancies and keep his Lyle job, making him the superintendent of three school districts with a combined enrollment of around 940 students.

The Big Picture Getting Bigger – Northeast Higher Education District

Many of the same districts that have been members of the Applied Learning Institute (ALI) have formed the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED), whose goal is innovation that promotes improved effectiveness and efficiency. According to Bob Belluzzo, superintendent of Hibbing Schools, “Most discussions have been philosophical in nature up to this point. Now it is time to get down to nuts and bolts. We will be looking at the full range from ways of taking traditional education and tweaking it to complete reform whereby we will abandon beliefs and philosophies and build something new. The question is, ‘What change can we really make that will provide the best education for kids?’”

SOY Reflections...

Continued from Page 5

“The truth is, though, that we all need to surround ourselves with the very best, smartest, and most trustworthy people we can find. And then we need to turn them loose to do their jobs and offer the input necessary to make us the best we can be... Recognize how significant their differing skills and abilities are to the mission of the cause, team, or organization, and allow them to use those gifts and abilities to get you there. Let them know how important their contributions are to the group’s success. Seek their input, listen to them, decide on the direction, and then go there together. It could very well make the difference between common and uncommon results.”

I may actually be as crazy as my friends have suggested. The interview process is fascinating to me. I love to consider the position, to focus thoughts and ideas, and to learn from others as the process unfolds. There is always a danger that the application will be accepted!

Congratulations!

Robert Brunicks,
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Virginia Dahlstrom,
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Excellence Recipients:

Region 1, **Gary Kuphal**
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Region 3, **Dave Marlette**
Region 4, **Tamara Uselman**
Region 5, **Curt Tryggestad**
Region 6, **Jack Almos**
Region 7, **Charles Rick**
Region 8, **Dan Parent**
Region 9, **Melissa Krull**

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Representatives.

All of these individuals are a representative of the leadership excellence found in MASA members: the willingness to risk, strong communication skills, a progressive change agent and high expectations for self and others, and their strong advocacy for Minnesota's children.

All of the above recipients will be honored at the 2011 MASA Spring Conference.





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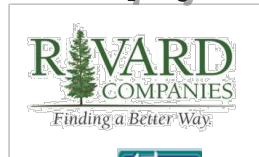


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A Vision for the 21st Century: Minnesota's Promise is Orono's Promise

What are the most important issues facing Minnesota's students and schools in the twenty-first century? Do our students possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to compete in a global economy? Can we as leaders help to transcend the divisions about existing educational policy and develop consensus around the essential elements of high-performing educational systems? These questions were integral to the development of the *Minnesota's Promise: World-Class Schools, World-Class State* framework and final report, completed in January, 2008.

For several years, a number of organizations, including MASA, worked together to develop this comprehensive strategy for improving public education. The effort began in 2005, with a year-long symposium of twenty-seven superintendents who strategized how to build relationships across communities and culminated three years later with stakeholder consensus around ten "essential elements" that defined high-performing educational systems. Articulation of strategies at the state, district, and school level and critical measures for each element were identified.

That same spirit of self-evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement has been a focus in the Orono Schools. We are proud of our tradition of academic rigor, high achievement, and exceptional family involvement. To meet our organizational vision and strive for all students being post-secondary ready, we needed to critically examine our professional practices, assessment systems, and academic programs to better align with the needs of the 21st century. While many of these efforts preceded development of the elements in Minnesota's Promise, they serve as a benchmark moving forward.

Our continuous improvement process uses data and research to monitor and evaluate student outcomes. We evaluate scholarship using measures of student growth and proficiency beginning with early literacy

and numeracy benchmarks through indicators of college readiness. We believe that good character and ethical decision making are critical skills for children to succeed in life. Our character program is based on the work of the Josephson Institute, emphasizing values and decision-making aligned with six ethical pillars. Finally, we emphasize and monitor relationships because we know the importance of school connectedness and family and community involvement to student and organizational success.

Because our vision is focused on the success of each student, our teachers and administrators needed additional capacity to implement and support differentiated teaching and assessment practices. We developed Differentiated Instruction teacher cohorts with Dr. Diane Heacox of St. Catherine University and trained teams of teachers and administrators in Assessment for Learning, modeled by the Assessment Training Institute in Portland, Oregon. Following leadership attendance at the PLC at Work Institute, an improved Professional Learning Community model focused on essential learnings, formative assessment, and student intervention is in development. Our Q-comp program provides resources for mentoring, coaching, evaluation, leadership, and professional incentives that are integral to implementation.

The Minnesota's Promise final report defines academic rigor as "all roads leading to higher education", which implies that schools must increase overall rigor and assure that all students are on rigorous paths in core academic subjects. Academic rigor for the 21st century also means that programming must prepare students for a global, multicultural society, to engage effectively with technology, and to apply creative solutions to novel problems. These attributes are best applied across disciplines, but we've prioritized program improvement in the areas of K-12 world languages

Continued on Page 23

SPRING CONFERENCE



MASA/MASE 2011
Spring Conference

March 17-18, 2011
Northland Inn
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

"The more complex society gets, the more
sophisticated leadership must become."
(Michael Fullan)

Leadership is both an art and a science, and when we examine leadership excellence, we must embrace the characteristics of both. School leadership reflects the increasingly complex environment in which schools exist. The science of school leadership relates to the evidence resulting from observation, study, research, and characterization of vetted practices that reliably predict success. The art of school leadership is about developing the wisdom and experience that supports the more nebulous intuition. Join your colleagues at the MASA/MASE Spring Conference this March as we examine the Art & Science of Leadership and learn to support yourself as a leader and a human being -- using both art and science!

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Conference Highlights ...

Keynote Speakers!

In his recently published book, *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in our Schools*, **Milton Chen** asks us to, "imagine an Education Nation, a learning society where the education of children and adults is the highest national priority, on par with a strong economy, high employment, and national security." Join us and hear his dynamic vision for a new world of education, based on his experience with programs and practices that are revolutionizing learning.

Doug Eadie is president & CEO of Doug Eadie & Company. He is the author of over 100 articles and eighteen books, including *Meeting the Change Challenge*. Drawing on his work with hundreds of public and nonprofit organizations, including many school districts, author and consultant Doug Eadie describes a powerful new tool that your district's Strategic Change Team can use to take command of your district's change.

Thursday Mid-day: It's Your Choice

The Spring Conference offers rich content with many options for customizing your conference experience via our Mid-day Choice Sessions. From 10:15 am to 1:15 pm, participants may choose among several conference options ... *browse the Exhibit Fair, attend a breakout session, participate in a discussion group, learn new skills in the Tech Suite.*

State of the State

Friday morning will be dedicated to the state of the state and the perspectives of our policymakers. We have invited a legislative panel to discuss their vision for Minnesota education. We have asked Governor Mark Dayton and Commissioner Brenda Cassellius to share their views. And of course, we will have a legislative update from MASA Executive Director Charlie Kyte.

Don't forget to shop the **Silent Auction**. Profits support the programs of the MASA Foundation. The **Exhibit Fair** is a great way to visit with company representatives offering the latest products and services. Sign up for the prize drawings!

New This Year!

Pre-Conference Workshops
6-9 pm, Wednesday March 16, 2011

Why not add to your conference experience by attending a pre-conference workshop? We have three great workshops available, whether or not you are attending the full Spring Conference. Choose From:

1. Financial Preparation for Retirement
2. Reflections on the Four-Day School Week
3. "Positioning" and Health Care Reform

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AASA CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

AASA Conference Resources Online

AASA's *Conference Daily Online*, accessible at www.aasa.org, carries some useful informational resources generated at AASA's National Conference on Education in Denver, Feb. 17-19.

You can find the following:

- Short summaries of keynote presenters, topical sessions and award winners.
- A video replay of Diane Ravitch's well-received General Session address.
- Brief audio clips of two conference presenters on college and career readiness.
- Human interest stories (in the "Seen & Heard" link).
- A daily photo gallery of conference activities.
- A conference blog with thoughtful insights and reactions by three bloggers, all superintendents and AASA members.

During the annual AASA Minnesota Breakfast, Scott Staska spoke about the honor of being named the

2010 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year. Deb Henton was also recognized for her Tech Savvy Superintendent Award.



Minnesota's AASA Governing Board: Luther Heller, Patty Phillips, Jim Hess and Jack Almos.

MASA would like to thank The Horace Mann Companies for generously sponsoring the Annual Minnesota Breakfast.

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HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL BOARDS

Meeting the Change Challenge

A Dramatic Advance in Innovation and Change

A dramatic advance in the field of strategic planning in recent years makes it possible for public and nonprofit governing boards, including your school board, to play a meaningful, high-impact role in leading innovation and change in your district, going well beyond merely thumbing through a finished 2-pound long-range planning tome. This variation on the broad strategic planning theme, which is especially promising in terms of creative school board involvement, is what I call the “strategic change portfolio” approach. The defining characteristic of this relatively new planning approach, which has been successfully tested in many public and nonprofit organizations, is that it results in a strategic portfolio consisting of above-the-line change initiatives that have been developed to address particular high-priority issues that the board has played a strong role in identifying.

These strategic initiatives are essentially change projects, consisting of action strategies and budgets, that are managed separately from day-to-day operational management so that they are not lost in the shuffle. Each project has a different time-frame, and year-to-year projects are implemented, thereby disappearing from the portfolio, and new projects are added to address new issues. For example, your school district’s strategic change portfolio might consist of 4 key change initiatives or projects at the present time:

1. The development and implementation of a new English as a second language program in your district, utilizing a special state grant, to respond to the dramatic growth of the Latino community in the district: a 12-month initiative
2. The implementation of major board enhancements aimed at strengthening the board’s governing role, including the implementation of a new committee structure: a 6-month initiative
3. The development and implementation of a partnership with the regional economic development commission aimed at tying K-12 education



Doug Eadie
President and CEO
Doug Eadie & Company, Inc.

explicitly into efforts to attract new firms to the region: an 18-month initiative

4. An extensive renovation of the fourth grade curriculum and related improvements in instructional methodology, aimed at beefing up seriously lagging student performance: a 24-month initiative

The Strategic Change Portfolio Process

The strategic change portfolio process typically begins with a board-superintendent-senior administrator retreat that kicks off two planning streams that proceed concurrently: the above-the-line portfolio process and the normal operational planning/budget preparation process, which continue along their parallel planning tracks after the retreat. Since the kick-off retreat provides your school board with its single most important opportunity to exert creative, proactive influence in the innovation and change process, I will describe how to bring off a successful retreat in the following section. For now, what you need to know is that the retreat can generate powerful drivers of the innovation process, including:

- An updated vision statement for your district that can serve as a framework for identifying strategic issues facing your district, which can be thought of as opportunities to move toward achieving particular elements of your district’s vision or major problems, barriers, and threats that might seriously impede progress in putting your district’s vision into practice. For a vision statement to serve as a useful planning tool, it must be much more than merely a 2 or 3-sentence statement intended to inspire and motivate “the troops” and wider public. A serious vision statement consists of several elements that paint a picture of the school district that you aspire to create over the long run, in terms of the ultimate outcomes that your district’s efforts are to produce, for example:

Continued on Page 17

Meeting the Change Challenge... Continued from Page 17

- ❖ Student performance at every grade level that exceeds state performance standards and average national performance
- ❖ Active, steadily growing parental involvement in our district from the time their children enter kindergarten through their 12th grade graduation
- ❖ Strong community support of our school district as evidenced by a willingness of resident to tax themselves to support the district
- Review and assessment of internal and external conditions and trends that are pertinent to our district's mission
- The identification and discussion of major issues facing our district, having to do with both internal and external conditions and trends
- The discussion of possible change initiatives to address the initiatives

After the retreat, your district's normal operational planning and budget preparation process moves forward, while along a completely separate but parallel track, the process of updating your district's strategic change portfolio begins. The first major follow-through step, applying to both of the planning tracks, is to analyze the several issues that were identified in the kick-off retreat, determining which ones it will make sense to channel to the operational planning/budget preparation process (because the judgment is made that they can be handled quite well there) and which ones merit further consideration as part of the above-the-line innovation process. Many boards rely on the superintendent and senior administrators to do the issue analysis and to recommend the disposition of issues to the board's planning committee, which makes the ultimate determination of where the issues will be sent.

The next step in the process is for the superintendent and senior administrators to analyze the above-the-line issues that have been selected and to recommend which ones will be addressed during the current planning process by fashioning detailed change initiatives that will be managed through the district's strategic change portfolio. Since

a school district's financial and other resources are both finite and scarce, selectivity is critical. The point is not to generate a shopping list of attractive strategic goals; rather, it is to eventually end up with a small number of strategic change initiatives – perhaps no more than 3 or 4 – that will be added to your district's portfolio this year. The objective is not to shoot high and miss, but to actually implement every change initiative in the portfolio. Many boards rely on their planning committees to work with the superintendent and senior administrators in making this determination. In doing so, one key question is typically asked about every issue on the list as part of this analysis and selection process:

What price is my district likely to pay if we do not tackle this issue: in terms of both direct penalties (such as failure to meet state standards and eventual loss of revenue) and indirect costs (such as losing an opportunity to generate grant income)? Of course, most school boards and administrators will rank issues the highest that have the largest and most direct impact on their district's educational bottom line: their students' performance. And at the head of this top-priority list of issues would be any that will directly impact a district's capacity to finance its educational efforts.

Once your board's planning committee has reached agreement with the superintendent on the issues that will be tackled in the current planning cycle, intensive board involvement necessarily recedes, as administrators and faculty move forward – often through ad hoc task forces – to fashion strategic change initiatives to address the selected issues. From this point on, board involvement in the portfolio process, with the planning committee taking the lead, normally entails reviewing recommended change initiatives and allocating the resources required to implement them.

Making the Annual Planning Retreat Work for Your Board

Retreats have become a popular vehicle for involving school board members, their superintendents, and senior administrators in accomplishing high-impact governing work that could not be accomplished – at least not as well – in regular board business meetings. Updating a vision

Continued on Page 23

MASA Jobsite: A District's Perspective

As the Recruitment Specialist for Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District, I have been using the MASA Jobsite since I started in this position about two years ago. In that time, I have seen significant improvements to the site, most notably the ability for a job seeker to add a resume and/or cover letter to their profile.

From a recruitment standpoint, the MASA Jobsite has made the process of sourcing candidates much easier. I can now see detailed descriptions of the previous positions they have held and, based on these descriptions, determine if they may be a good fit for a current opening within our district. In addition, I can also see if a candidate has a consistent work history, what level of education they have received, if they are able to communicate effectively in writing, etc., which

are all factors that influence my decision to contact them.

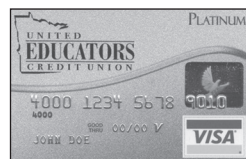
I am happy to say that, based on these improvements, I have increased the number of individuals I contact regarding our openings and, within the past 8 months, we have hired two great individuals whose information I first found on the MASA Jobsite. As spring rolls around and we look to start recruiting for the 2011-2012 school year, I will definitely be utilizing the MASA Jobsite to find more quality candidates.

*Written by Megan McAllister, Recruitment Specialist
Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District*

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Meeting the Change Challenge... Continued from Page 21

statement and identifying and discussing strategic and operational issues certainly fall in this category. The return on your district's investment of time, energy, and money in a retreat can be quite powerful, in terms not only of substantive outcomes such as an updated vision statement, but also process spin-offs such as esprit de corps, satisfaction, ownership of – and commitment to – directions coming out of the retreat, and even emotional bonding among participants.

However, just because you assemble the right cast of characters in an attractive retreat setting away from headquarters for a day or two does not mean that you will automatically realize a powerful return on your investment in the event. Be forewarned: retreats are high-risk affairs that can easily fall apart, doing far more harm than good, if they are not meticulously designed and conducted. The last thing you need is one of those “retreats from hell” that leave everyone with a sense of having wasted precious time and energy for naught. I will never forget interviewing members of a client board several years ago, who had had a terrible retreat experience 5 years earlier. What amazed me was how long the bad taste had lasted. I heard essentially the same tale from every board member I talked with. It went something like this: “We spent a whole morning debating every word in a one-paragraph vision statement and the afternoon pasting green, yellow, and red dots on flip-chart sheets taped on the walls. If you put us through this again, you'll be run out of town on a rail!”

Over the years, experience has taught me that rigorously following 5 golden rules will ensure that your retreat pays off handsomely for your district without putting it at risk:

1. Make sure that your school board is involved in putting together the detailed design, including: the desired outcomes (for example, an updated vision statement; the identification of strategic issues); the structure (for example, location; length; breakout groups to be employed);
2. Employ a professional facilitator.
3. Use well-designed breakout groups to generate content, promote feelings of ownership, and generate active participation.
4. Avoid reaching premature formal consensus or making final decisions.

5. Agree on the follow-through process at the beginning, including how formal consensus will be reached and final decisions made.

This article is adapted from Chapter Three of *Doug Eadie's Five Habits of High-Impact School Boards* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland; 2005).

You can email Doug at Doug@DougEadie.com.

Orono's Promise... Continued from Page 16

A promise connotes both an affirmation of commitment to the present and a belief in the potential of the future. I believe in the vision of Minnesota's Promise in part because of our organizational success and commitment to its elements, but also because of the excellence of Minnesota educators and our state's history of commitment to children.

*Written by Aaron Ruhland
Director of Learning and Accountability
Orono Schools*



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Meet Your President-Elect Candidates

This year, MASA is once again fortunate to have a strong slate of candidates for the various leadership positions' elections. Many thanks to everyone running for a leadership position. We offer special thanks to Jim Hess and Jerry Ness, candidates for MASA President-Elect. The position of MASA President is a challenging and time-consuming one, and we are very fortunate to have continued interest by such quality leaders. Below are Jim and Jerry's comments:



Jim Hess
Superintendent
Bemidji Area Schools

Quite a few years ago I attended a school administrator conference in Breckenridge, Colorado where a former MN school superintendent relayed a leadership story that stayed with me through my career. Some of you may remember Bob Tschirki, who served as superintendent in Northfield, Minnesota and would know he might

have slightly stretched a fact or two in order to have a spellbinding story. Bob's story went like this: While serving as a school administrator, he was invited to use a friend's cabin to get away from work for a few days. It was bitterly cold so Bob kept a roaring fire while he relaxed for the weekend. The glowing flames kept Bob and his wife warm and comfortable while the wintry winds howled outside. Bob returned to work, well-rested and ready for the next big challenges he faced in school leadership.

A co-worker of Bob's asked how the weekend was at the cabin and Bob fondly relayed his wonderful northwoods experience. After listening to Bob's recount of the weekend, the co-worker asked if Bob left the woodpile a little higher than he found it for the next person who would enjoy the cabin? He said that was the Minnesota way. It dawned on Bob that he had not left the woodpile higher than he found it, but rather he had used a large amount of firewood for his personal warmth and comfort. The following weekend, Bob spent an entire day cutting, splitting, and stacking firewood in the northwoods for the next person who would use the cabin to restore his energy and renew his focus.

Like Bob Tschirki I find that I have been often going to the woodpile to find the logs necessary to operate my schools and we are burning through our resources at an alarming rate as we provide for our children's education in these challenging economic times. Here are a few of my thoughts about what we need to do to restore the woodpile for Minnesota schools:

- Advocate for sustainable, adequate, and equitable funding for all Minnesota students and schools.
- Work to unite all Minnesota Pre K-12 school administrators under a comprehensive umbrella organization to meet the needs of members and advocate with one voice on behalf of Minnesota's children.
- Continue strong efforts to provide effective recruitment, mentorship, and nurturing for new and veteran school leaders.
- Expand initiatives to work cooperatively with MnSCU and the University of Minnesota systems to develop and expand exemplary teacher preparation programs based upon best practice and solid research.

Thank you for your dedicated service to students and your communities. It would be my privilege to work at your side to replenish the woodpile for our schools and serve as MASA President-Elect. I would appreciate your support and vote.

Jim

**Ballots will be mailed during the week of
March 21st. Be sure to watch your mail!**

Meet Your President-Elect Candidates



Jerry Ness
Superintendent
Fergus Falls Schools

It is an honor and privilege to be nominated for the position of MASA President-Elect. In my eleven years as superintendent and two years as Executive Director of Minnesota Rural Education Association, I have relied on MASA for guidance and support during one of the most difficult times

for education in Minnesota's history. It is my hope to share my passion and enthusiasm for educating students as MASA's next President-Elect.

As the current MASA Legislative Committee Chair and having served on the Board of Directors, I have an understanding of MASA's organizational structure, the legislative process and have fostered relationships with state leaders. As MREA's Executive Director, I learned first hand how to lead a statewide education organization of 150 schools, develop a relevant platform, and most importantly, influence policy makers.

Education is a people business and having positive relationships is the foundation of success in every classroom and organization. If I were to become the President-Elect, finding the common connections with our partners to strengthen education would be a key focus area. When solving difficult problems, like the state's budget deficit, having positive and collaborative relationships with policy makers will allow us to advance our legislative platform.

A second – equally important – focus would be the continuation of excellent communication with our members and partners. As superintendent, I try to model positive communication through a variety of methods, such as weekly email reports, staff listening sessions and school board work sessions. A special

emphasis is spent on communicating with our students, parents and community by writing weekly newspaper columns and keeping an updated Web site featuring staff's Posterous accounts, FaceBook and Twitter streams.

MASA will continue to be the pre-eminent voice advocating for public education in Minnesota. Our focus will be on delivering the key messages for our platform regarding Academic Success, Educational Workforce, Education Funding, Contain Increasing Costs, Levy Pressures, Creativity & Innovation and Retirement Funds. Achieving academic success – in stressful times – leads me to believe that the most important platform plank may be allowing for creativity and innovation by releasing districts from mandates and restrictions that inhibit true reform. Again, in order to receive permission to be creative and innovative, we must continue and strengthen our relationships with legislators, education and business organizations and citizens.

Thank you for your membership and active participation in our organization. I look forward to seeing you at the spring MASA Conference. I would welcome your support for the position of President-Elect.

Jerry



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DID YOU KNOW...?

Did you know that each MASA Region now has a web page on the MASA Website?

Each MASA Region has the opportunity to have information posted on their page such as meeting agendas, minutes and other pertinent information.

To visit the MASA Region pages go to the MASA home page at <http://www.mnasa.org>.

On the channel bar click on "About Us"

On the drop down menu click "Regional Information"



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Framework for the Future Those Things That Matter Most



Shari Prest
Ark Associates

Ninety percent of school-age children in Minnesota attend public schools. Unfortunately, the system that exists to educate those children and prepare them for the future is in trouble. The demands on schools have grown and diversified, while the support to meet those demands has not.

Minnesota is facing a \$6.2 billion deficit. Twenty-seven percent of the state funding designated for schools this biennium has been shifted into the next biennium and is not guaranteed to be repaid. Even if the state increases the shift to 50 percent of funding, adds racino money, cuts local government aid completely, puts a sales tax on clothing, taxes the rich more, cuts \$1 billion from human services and cuts \$500 from the funding of each pupil in K-12 education, Minnesota would still have a \$600 million problem that will require a large adjustment by almost all state systems.

Some of Minnesota's future will be guided by the limitations we face. More of Minnesota's future will be the result of the people's ability to have a vision, see the potential, and make a commitment.

Minnesotans know that the foundation of a successful system of public education requires a focus on academic success, rigor and standards; adequate and stable funding (including local levy authority), flexibility to optimize staff resources, highest quality educators; and creativity and innovation.

Minnesotans will determine if our kids and the futures they create really matter most.

- Is society willing to accept and support change?
- Are educators, parents, and students willing to give up the way things are—including some programs, conveniences and amenities—to focus limited

resources on academic achievement?

- How will Minnesotans demonstrate their commitment?

Schools may become significantly different to meet the challenges they face.

- Discussion, exploration, planning, and implementation of innovation in education is currently going on around the state.
- New partnerships are being formed; calendars, contracts, teachers, administrations, transportation, and sports are being shared between districts.
- Technology is being used to increase personalized learning, expand curriculum, and improve both achievement and efficiency.
- Greater recognition is being given to the importance of the learning continuum from birth and early childhood through higher education.

Educators, parents, students and communities will need to step up and collaborate in ways not previously experienced.

- Schools have had responsibility for the complete child: getting them to and from school; providing meals; and providing after-school and co-curricular programming, all in addition to meeting expectations of academic excellence. That responsibility has been diligently carried forth but the capacity of schools is increasingly limited.
- The continued success of schools will depend more heavily than ever on Minnesotans' willingness to vision, plan, and implement collaboratively—sharing risks, costs, and successes.

Educational leaders across the state of Minnesota are working collaboratively in their school districts, schools, communities, regions and the state to ensure that what is best about Minnesota gets even better. Success will be the result of all Minnesota stakeholders' commitment to kids, quality, and the future they will share.

Fair Dismissal Act... Continued from Page 9

Manifestation Determination

Before a district may even propose the expulsion of a special education student, it must conduct a manifestation determination within 10 days of the sixth consecutive day of suspension or the tenth cumulative day of suspension. If the behavior forming the basis for the expulsion consideration is not related to the child's disability, then—and only then—may the school district consider expulsion.

1. Issues to be addressed. Under federal law, a team may determine that the behavior of the child was not a manifestation of such child's disability only after the IEP team considers all relevant information and then determines that:
 - a. the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability; or
 - b. the conduct in question was the direct result of the school district's failure to implement the IEP.
2. Documents and materials which the team should consider include:
 - a. prior evaluations and information supplied by parents;
 - b. observations of the child; and
 - c. the child's IEP and placement.

Remember – timelines contained in the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act are critical: 15 days for a regular education student and 10 days for a disabled student.

The countdown begins with the first day of suspension (or removal for disabled students) from school. When an incident takes place which you believe may lead to a student's expulsion, first check to see whether the student has an IEP; and, second, count the days.

Agreement in Lieu of Expulsion

In appropriate circumstances, the parents of a student facing a proposed expulsion as a result of the student's misconduct may agree to voluntarily withdraw the student from school for a specified period of time (but not more than one calendar year). Under such an agreement, the school district agrees to provide alternative education services for the duration of the period of withdrawal. The value of such an agreement is that the parents and the student—who admittedly engaged in misconduct for which expulsion may result—can avoid the stigma

associated with a proposed expulsion by voluntarily agreeing to withdraw for a specified period of time—while still receiving alternative education services. The value of an agreement in lieu of expulsion to a school district is that it provides for voluntary removal of the student who has threatened school safety without incurring the time and expense of processing a proposed student expulsion.

Suspension Days + Academic Penalty = Double Jeopardy

The suspension requirements contained in the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act do not apply to dismissal from school for one school day or less. According to a memorandum from the Department of Education, there is considerable debate regarding whether a dismissal for one day or less may be treated as an “excused” or “unexcused” absence by local school districts. It is the opinion of the Department of Education that removals for one day or less may be treated as either “excused” or “unexcused,” as there is no specific statutory direction, and it is within the discretion of the school board.





However, the Department of Education went on to opine that if a school district considers a disciplinary removal for a day or less “unexcused” and then imposes a grade reduction for the behavior, this constitutes a second consequence for the same behavior. Therefore, it is the department's opinion that a suspension or removal from school for one day or less should not be considered “unexcused” if doing so would impose two penalties for the same course of misconduct. The reasoning is that the academic penalty would inaccurately reflect a student's academic performance because the suspension day is unrelated to the student's academic conduct.

On the other hand, if your school district's policy classifies a student's absence due to suspension as “unexcused” or even “excused” and requires the student to complete the work missed, academic penalties would be appropriate if the student fails to make up the work. The student would be given consequences for failure to make up the work and not simply because he or she was absent from school. Failure to complete assignments within the designated time period resulting in a “0” for the day missed would reflect academic performance.

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.
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MASA Grant Contributes to Trip to Harvard Graduate School of Education

As a new Superintendent of Schools, I found myself fearful of asking “dumb” questions. Intuitively, I could tell myself that everyone is a rookie at some point, and needs to learn the ropes. It’s quite another thing to ask the questions that will help you succeed and thrive in this role. I am continually grateful to my MASA colleagues for their patience and wisdom as they have helped me navigate the waters of school administration together.

A wonderful opportunity to strengthen my skills came through the MASA Foundation Scholarship. On an annual basis, the Foundation awards up to \$750 for professional development. Members are encouraged to apply for these funds to support educational opportunities. I was fortunate to receive one of these grants to attend the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Programs in Professional Education, in a week-long study called “Redesigning High Schools for Improved Instruction.” It was the perfect opportunity for me to take some time away from the district to really focus my energy on problem-solving.

The program was the perfect match for my situation. As a rapidly growing district, we anticipate the need for a new high school by 2015. However, I firmly believe that we can’t talk about bricks and mortar without talking about the programs that take place within those walls. The program at Harvard was an opportunity to jump into this topic with both feet. Harvard is quite the place. There is no free pass to come & go as you please. The professors were totally committed to our experience. Prior to arrival, we had multiple readings to complete, and a requirement to identify the primary “problem” that we wanted to address. The faculty worked hard to group us with others with like interests, although they managed to balance the participants by age, gender, race, geographic location. We challenged each other to find our solutions by looking to our peers for insight & experience. For six days, we read, researched, talked, and listened to new ideas. It all helped me

focus our district direction. I am certain I would not have taken the concentrated time to develop these practices without this program.

One of the best practices I experienced there was the idea of “being present.” We were politely, yet firmly, reminded to be involved in the discussion in the room, and not on our Blackberries. There were plenty of breaks, and enough opportunity to check-in with our offices. It was almost freeing to have an excuse to disregard the “you’ve got mail” signs.

The opportunity that the MASA Foundation Scholarship provided for me was invaluable. The opportunity to learn from esteemed instructors and talented peers was inspiring. Of course, being in Boston provided the opportunity to check off one more item on my bucket-list: After the conference ended on July 2, I stayed and enjoyed the Boston Pops play the 1812 Overture on July 4, choreographed with fireworks over the Charles River! Priceless!

*Written by Nancy Rajanen, Superintendent,
Waconia Schools*

MASA Foundation Grants Available!

The MASA Foundation will provide up to 10 grants to members this year for professional development experiences that you would not be able to access through your district or that are unique learning opportunities. Grants can range from \$500-\$750. To apply, simply submit a one page summary of your intended experience and either mail it to the MASA offices: 1884 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, fax to (651) 645-7518 or email Charlie Kyte, and the Foundation Grant Committee will consider it in a timely manner.

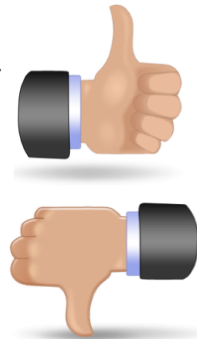
LEADER'S TOOLBOX

Your Feedback- The DOs and DON'Ts of Educational Leadership

Superintendents know that there are only So many hours in the day and have become quite adept at maximizing resources – including our daily planners. In fact, most superintendents are time management specialists with a flare for multi-tasking. Prioritizing our efforts can be challenging, because every interaction, along with obsessive attention to detail ensure our work's quality. Conversations, phone calls, personal interaction help build relationships for our future work. Research, review, and analysis firm-up decision-making and strengthen our schools. As district visionaries, managers, and cheerleaders, we are constantly on the spot to perform and lead. So, in order to be effective in streamlining your schedules, you need to be confident in your ability to politely and compassionately discern and minimize duplication and redundancy. Encourage colleagues, partners, students and parents to focus on the topic of discussions and avoid repetition. Develop skimming skills that allow you to read highlights and spend time on real content. Go to primary sources and avoid intermediaries when researching or investigating issues. Try not to spend too much time getting caught up in the middle, be direct and tap resources and colleagues that can move you directly to GO!

*Written by Cathy Bettino
Superintendent, Pine River-Backus Schools*

I have a mentor, a colleague, and a great friend who I look to often when I lose faith and hope in the direction our political leaders are trying to take public education. DuWayne always said do NOT focus on the politicians, focus on the kids because they are the hope. His words of support and guidance continue to help me through these times even now that he is long retired. I think of him saying do NOT dwell on those who want to limit our children because we do believe in the possibilities of all children. Or the time he said, "David! Stop being so angry at those NOT willing to change because we can find those who are willing to change." We would talk about innovation and the fact that we should NOT focus on what we



have done but on new and challenging ways for teachers to teach and children to learn. Mostly, I miss the daily excitement he exuded about the opportunity to be a public school teacher and administrator and him telling me that he could NOT think of anything else more important or exciting than being a teacher.

*Written by David Krenz
Superintendent, Austin Schools*

Don't be complacent. Do have a sense of urgency for change. Don't hole up in your office and get stuck behind your desk. Do MBWA (manage by walking around). Don't put your leadership in cruise control. Do be dissatisfied with the status quo. Don't micromanage. Do empower. Don't think there aren't any alligators just because the water is calm. Do be proactive and well prepared. Don't spend time blaming others. Do, in the words of football coach Bill Parcells, "Blame no one. Expect nothing. Do something." Don't talk too much. Do listen more than you talk. Don't spend time creating long power point presentations. Do tell stories that touch heartstrings. Don't check your e-mail and voicemail during meetings. Do put people before paper and technology. Don't be a climber - climbers value competition and seek power. Do be a connector and value collaboration & partnerships. Don't use jargon, because it confuses rather than clarifies. Do speak in simple terms. Don't try to remove by logic an idea not placed there by logic in the first place. Do know when to just step back, keep quiet and breathe. Don't be trapped in the business of unimportant things. Do what matters. Don't keep trying to bring an issue back to life if it's dead. Do know when to let go. Don't take yourself too seriously. Do lighten up and seek joy in every single day.

*Written by Patty Phillips
Superintendent
N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Potential Changes in MASA Professional Development Delivery...

The MASA Executive Development Committee has been discussing a possible change of direction for the way MASA delivers professional development for members. The essence of this change would have MASA dropping one of its major annual conferences and instead developing a more personalized professional development approach.

The Executive Development Committee recognizes that major changes for a state-wide association take some time. They have developed a proposal that will next go to the Board of Directors. The Board will consider the proposal this March and possibly act on it in June. If approved, the changes will take about a year and a half to implement.

First of all, the Executive Development Committee recommends that MASA discontinue providing a fall conference for its members. We already have contracts for the 2011 Fall Conference in Duluth and in 2012 at Maddens Resort. If this change materializes this conference would be discontinued by 2013.

Second, the Executive Development Committee recommends that MASA explore the possibility of joining with other associations to enhance the present August pre-school workshop. The Department of Education now provides the superintendents workshop each August and is scheduled next to the Summer MSBA Seminar. The thought would be to invite other associations to participate in a more comprehensive pre-school conference where administrators from numerous backgrounds come together for a comprehensive conference prior to the school year beginning.

Third, the Executive Development Committee recommends that MASA begin the development of a more personalized professional development



Charlie Kyte
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of
School Administrators

sequence utilizing technology to provide information and learning to our members on an as needed basis. Often members need specific information regarding the operation and leadership of their schools, but need it at times when it most effectively can be deployed. Thus, rather than holding a single workshop once a year the association would provide an online format that members can access when they need it.

Fourth, MASA would continue to provide a number of specialized workshops for new members, mid-career members and specific component groups such as our curriculum directors. These workshops have been effective in bringing subsets of our membership together for specific purposes.

Finally, MASA would explore the development of a very high level annual learning experience for a small group of members. MASA will approach several of the major foundations proposing that these foundations provide funding so approximately 20-25 members can come together each year for a much more intense leadership experience. Done over time, such a cohort repeated annually, could effectively help to drive change in how we approach the leadership of education and would involve a significant number of our members over a period of five to ten years.

The Executive Development Committee looks forward to the MASA Board considering the proposal they are bringing forth with the goal of MASA continuing to provide excellent professional development for its' members.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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 Education Leadership

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

Join us on Wednesday, March 16, 2011 from 1-4 pm at the Northland Inn.

for our second annual "At Ruth's Table" conversation. This is an opportunity for women educational leaders to gather for learning, networking and idea sharing. Each practicing education leader is encouraged to bring a woman guest who is considering a career in educational leadership. Guests attend without cost. Let's build our community of women who are excellent education leaders!

Find registration information on the MASA web site: www.mnasa.org.

New this year! We are offering a reduced student rate.

Ruth's table is made possible through the generous support of Kraus-Anderson Construction Company.

Refresh...update with new data...recharge...restore strength and animation...stimulate and inspire...



Fresh Start Series
Wednesday, March 16, 2011
10 am - 4 pm
Northland Inn, Minneapolis

Whether you are in your first year as a school district leader, or you have practiced for many years, you will benefit from the skill-building and networking of the Fresh Start Series. The March session will focus on Web 2.0, knowing your districts limits on regulating students behavior in cyberspace, cyberbullying and the emerging world of social teaching.

Register Today! Registration is available on the MASA web site: www.mnasa.org

Mark your calendar for future sessions on different topics!

Wednesday, April 27, 2011

Wednesday, July 20, 2011

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

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Fall Conference**
October 2 - 4, 2011
Duluth Entertainment
Convention Center, Duluth

Mark your calendars today for the annual
MASA Fall Conference!



A Professional Development Opportunity Especially for New Superintendents, sponsored by Springsted, Inc.

Great Start Workshop IV
Wednesday, March 16, 2011
9:00 am - 3:30 pm
Northland Inn, Minneapolis

This final session will help bring your first year to a close. Topics to be covered include school board elections, data retreats and how to tie them to student achievement, bonds/cash flow/credit ratings and special needs.

Registration materials available on the MASA web site: www.mnasa.org

**MASA, MASE, MASSP and MESPA
Invite You to Attend the**

Emerging Leaders Conference

Thursday, March 24, 2011

8:30 am - 3:45 pm

TIES Education Center, St. Paul

Reflect on leadership practice, learn what it takes to lead well, and consider the implications of shifting gears to a different type of practice, whether you are thinking about licensure as a principal, superintendent, special education director or other central office administrator. This practical one-day conference is for motivated and talented emerging education leaders, and current leaders seeking new directions.

More information and registration material is available on the collaborating organizations' web sites!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2011... March

16
Great Start Workshop IV
9- 3:30 pm
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center
Fresh Start Workshop
10-4 pm
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center
"At Ruth's Table"
1-4 pm
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
9-10:45 am
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
11am- 4 pm
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

17-18
MASA & MASE Spring Conference
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park

24
Emerging Leaders Conference
TIES, St. Paul

24-26
International Technology Education
Association Conference
Minneapolis

27
Fresh Start Series Workshop
MASA Board Room, St. Paul

April

15
MASA General Election Ballots Due
21
Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
MASA Board Room, St. Paul

22
Spring Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

21
Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
MASA Board Room, St. Paul

May

13
Newsletter Submissions Due
30
Memorial Day Holiday
MASA Offices Closed

June

20-21
Board of Directors Retreat
Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul

July

20
Fresh Start Series Workshop
MASA Board Room, St. Paul
27-29
"Legends" Women's Retreat
Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge
Grand Rapids, MN

August

9
Annual Superintendent Conference

October

2-4
MASA Fall Conference
Duluth Entertainment Convention
Center

19
Fresh Start Series Workshop
MASA Board Room, St. Paul



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

