

# Leaders FORUM

Summer 2010

## A Sincere Thank You

It's hard to believe that the 2009-10 school year is quickly drawing to a close. I'm sure for all of you it has been a year filled with times of great joy as well as times of challenges. I want to sincerely thank you for all of your efforts over the course of this school year. In my role as MASA President, I have been provided the opportunity to get to know many more of our MASA members. I have been thoroughly impressed with the dedication that is easily recognizable from all of our members. Though at times it may appear that we are not in a position to make a difference in the lives of our students, staff and community, please know that on a daily basis your impact is profound. Stay the course and always consider what is best for your students in all decisions that you make.

I want to thank our business partners for all that they do to strengthen our organization. Without your support and involvement we would not be able to provide our members with the high quality of professional experiences that are available on a yearly basis. The expertise exhibited by our business partners helps us to be more efficient in our school operations and provides us the opportunities to stretch the value of our resources.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership that is provided to MASA by Charlie Kyte. Charlie truly is one of the leading student advocates within the state of Minnesota. As I walked the halls of the capitol with Charlie, it was clear that he has



Gary Amoroso  
Superintendent  
MASA President

earned the respect of legislators from both sides of the aisle. Charlie's efforts truly have had a positive impact on all of us.

As an organization, we are truly blessed to have unbelievable staff that works tirelessly to serve all of us: Mia Urick, Stephanie Kastanos, Jeanna Quinn, Mary Law and Deb Larson. As a result of their tireless efforts our organization continues to thrive and be vibrant. We all owe this outstanding staff a huge

### THANK YOU!

As my year as president draws to a conclusion, I want to thank all of our members for having provided me an experience of a lifetime. I cherish the new friendships that have been made and friendships that have been strengthened. It has been a very humbling experience to represent all of you. Please know that I stand ready to be available to you as a resource or simply an ear to listen if the need arises. I wish each of you a relaxing and enjoyable summer. I hope that you will have the opportunity to recharge your batteries in preparation for the 2010-11 school year. I wish the best to our incoming president, Jeff Olson. Jeff is an outstanding educator who will do a magnificent job in leading our organization forward. Once again, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to serve this extraordinary organization.

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## Governance The Minnesota State High School League

Superintendents need to become more involved in the governance of the Minnesota State High School League. Decisions are regulated by the governing body of the High School League that has significant effects on the cost basis of operating our school systems. As we struggle with budgets we need this important area brought into central consideration in our school districts.

The Minnesota State High School League is ably lead by Dave Stead; he and his staff over the years have done an excellent job of providing the governance, the growth, and the direction for student activities in the state of Minnesota. They are one of the best high school leagues in the nation.

Years ago, the governing body of the state high school league consisted mainly of superintendents of schools, each elected from their region. Each school district had a single vote. In addition, the superintendents sat in on all athletic conference meetings at the conference level, district level, and regional level. However, as the job of running our schools became more complex we first delegated much of this role to the secondary principal. As the secondary principals' roles became more complex, they delegated this job to the athletic directors. Now in some cases, as the athletic directors' roles have become complex they have delegated this job to a senior coach.

The net result is that at this point only one superintendent sits on the board of directors of the state high school league. Further, in many school districts votes are being cast regarding the governance of our student activities systems a long ways away from the central office of the district. These votes are often made from the mindset of coach and athletic directors rather than from the mindset of governing the entire school district.

So it is time for superintendents to reengage and there are two specific things that can be done:

1. We need to have more school superintendents sitting on the board of directors of the state high school league. To do this requires a superintendent from each region, when a vacancy occurs, to fill the position. It also requires that the superintendents of that region direct the vote of their school towards that superintendent. Quite quickly we could have



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of  
School Administrators

a fair representation of superintendents on the board of directors thus helping to guide decisions at the state level that will take into account to at greater degree the issues in each school district.

2. Superintendents should re-assume greater control of the decisions and votes made by their school districts at the conference, district, and regional levels. The superintendent annually has the right to identify the voting member of the school district for state high school league activities. They could designate themselves to take that responsibility, however, if the demands of the superintendent job are such they could also set it up so another administrator has that responsibility but that critical votes are first reviewed by the superintendent so that the vote of the school district is consistent with the interest of the full school district. What should not happen is that an individual is appointed to make these decisions by the school district without some process within the school district by which critical issues are reviewed and then a vote is cast that fulfills the interest of the school district.

We want Minnesota to continue to have a strong state high school league. To do so the Minnesota State High School League needs to work in concert with the leadership of school districts. If we want that to happen it is important that across the state superintendents of schools reengage in the governance at the state and other levels of school activity programs.

**Be sure to mark your calendars for the 2010 Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota Fall Conference, November 17-19, 2010 - Cragun's Resort, Brainerd.**

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

## Leaders Forum

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Registration materials will be emailed and available on the MASA web site -- <http://www.mnasa.org> -- in early August.

*See you in Brainerd!*



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

## Have you renewed your membership?

Membership materials have been mailed. For more information or additional membership materials, contact the MASA office at (651/645-6272 / 866-444-5251 or [members@mnasa.org](mailto:members@mnasa.org)) or visit our web site at ([www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org)).

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**Have an enjoyable  
and relaxing  
summer!**  
**From the Staff at  
MASA**

## Promise for the Future Revisiting Minnesota's Promise

### The “Minnesota’s Promise” Vision

Through the Minnesota’s Promise process, most educational organizations across the state, as well as diverse groups of citizens of our state, identified and agreed upon ten essential elements of a high-performing educational system. They are:

1. **Early Childhood Education:** Investment in educational success starts early.
2. **Educator Quality:** Great teachers and principals are recruited, prepared, supported, and retained.
3. **Academic Rigor:** All academic roads are rigorous, and all lead to higher education.
4. **Family and Community Involvement:** Families and communities are full partners in education.
5. **Multicultural Community:** All cultures are included and supported, and connections are made across local and global cultural divides.
6. **Data and Research:** Educators use data and research to improve teaching and learning every day.
7. **Funding:** Schools are provided with funding that is predictable and sufficient to produce world-class performance.
8. **Time:** Schedules and calendars are designed to help all students reach high standards.
9. **Special Education:** Services for students with disabilities are proactive, effective, efficient, and adequately funded.
10. **Health and Wellness:** Parents and other stakeholders ensure that students come to school physically and mentally ready to learn.

**The Promise:** “Minnesota’s Promise” to our children and the future requires vision and support to become reality,

- First, the realization will come through the extraordinary promise of our young people and their ability to imagine, create and manage an even better future for our state. Today’s students *are* tomorrow’s promise. It is in the interest of all of us to provide each and every child access to a system of public education that will prepare them to take on the awesome opportunities before them.
- Second, the realization will come through our shared and enduring commitment to a framework that ensures



Shari Prest  
Ark Associates

students will receive a world-class education that prepares them for success in a rapidly evolving future.

*“Where better to invest in our future? The education of our children will ultimately provide Minnesota with both a strong economy and a civilized society.” – Charlie Kyte, Executive Director, MASA*

**The Challenge:** It is difficult to secure the funds needed to implement “Minnesota’s Promise” to its fullest extent. This challenge can only be resolved when the leaders and people of our state reconcile

the difference between what we say we value and how we choose to invest our resources.

**The Opportunities:** Working together, we can grow the willingness and capacity of the people of Minnesota to *do* more to *achieve* more. There is a role for everyone in unlocking the potential of today’s leaders and learners to fulfill tomorrow’s promise.

### The Questions:

1. How committed are we to educating our children?
2. What can *you* do to fulfill the promise and realize the dream?
  - **Learn about it.** Go to [minnesotaspromise.org](http://minnesotaspromise.org)
  - **Talk about it.** Share what you know or learn with your families, neighborhoods, government officials, and your community and school leaders.
  - **Commit to it.** Find at least one way you can make a difference in your local schools, your school district, and in the state.
  - **Be willing to pay for it.** A high quality system of public education is the best investment we can make for future returns.

*“Our children only have one opportunity to participate in a world-class education system. We must come together as a state and advocate on behalf of our children. If that means more funding, we must find a way to provide it.*

*The essence of our democracy is rooted in a well-educated population. Without this, our American way of life will be in jeopardy.” – Gary Amoroso, Superintendent Lakeville Area Schools, MASA President*



## THE REAL GROUND WAS BROKEN AFTER CONSTRUCTION.

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**Arif Quraishi**

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## Bullying at School What Does This Really Mean?

**M**innesota law requires all school districts to have a policy prohibiting and addressing bullying. Interestingly, our state has no law defining bullying or making bullying unlawful. Yet it is important for schools to have the mandated policy, to implement it and enforce it. Failure to do so can result in claims against the school district. This article will discuss the identification, investigation and litigation of such claims.

**Q: What is bullying?**

**A:** The model policy defines bullying. “Bullying” means any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture, or pattern thereof, by a student that is intended to cause or is perceived as causing distress to one or more students and which substantially interferes with another student’s or students’ educational benefits, opportunities, or performance. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, conduct by a student against another student that a reasonable person under the circumstances knows or should know has the effect of harming a student, damaging a student’s property, placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or property, or creating a hostile educational environment for a student. However the law does not define it.

**Q: Is bullying the same as illegal harassment?**

**A:** No, it is not. Bullying is not necessarily behavior done because of the victim’s race, sexual orientation, gender, etc. It can be any behavior meeting the policy definition. However, if a student is “bullied” or mistreated because of a protected status, then bullying may also become illegal harassment under the district’s harassment policy and under the law if it has a significant and pervasive effect on the student’s educational participation.

**Q: Can the district or its staff be sued for failing to prevent bullying?**

**A:** Yes and no. Since “bullying” is not unlawful unless it involves a protected class status, one must ask whether the district or its staff is responsible for one student’s mistreatment of another. The answer to that is maybe.

The federal courts have held that school districts have no constitutional duty to protect students from the



Susan Torgerson  
Attorney  
Kennedy & Graven

acts of other students. *Montgomery v. Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 709*, 109 F.Supp.2d 1081, 1096 (D.Minn. 2000) (citing *Dorothy J v. Little Rock Sch. Dist.*, 7 F.3d 729 (8th Cir. 1993)). The Constitution serves to protect individuals from the acts of the government. It is not intended to protect individuals from the actions of other individuals. *DeShaney v. Winnebago County Dep’t of Social Servs.*, 489 U.S. 189, 197 (1989). A general allegation that a school failed to ensure the safety of one of its students from another student’s unknown misbehaviors “is the kind of ‘traditional tort law’ claim that the Supreme Court has refused to translate into a due process deprivation.” *Dorothy J.*, 7 F.3d at 733 (citing *Collins v. City of Harker Heights*, 503 U.S. 115, 112 S.Ct. 1061, 1070 (1992)).

Some have suggested that the student’s enrollment in the public schools establishes a “special relationship” that creates a greater duty on the part of schools to protect their students. The Eighth Circuit has specifically rejected this argument, explaining that compulsory school attendance laws do “not entail so restrictive a custodial relationship as to impose upon the State the same duty to protect it owes to prison inmates . . . or to the involuntarily institutionalized.” *Dorothy J.*, 7 F.3d at 732.

However, if a district fails to take reasonable precautions in the face of foreseeable harm, it may become legally responsible for a student’s injury by another student in some circumstances. Further, if such behavior results in physical injury, liability may also result from a lack of intervention in some kinds of cases.

**Q: How can schools prevent or minimize liability for students’ bullying or mistreatment of other students?**

**A:** Be sure that your district has a policy prohibiting bullying as required by state law. Be sure that your administration and staff are trained at recognizing issues, receiving and channeling complaints to the proper party within the school.

Also, be sure that students are trained and aware of the policy prohibiting bullying and the consequences of violation. Include parents in this information. Then, enforce the policy by investigating and taking

Continued on Page 7

## Bullying at School Continued from page 6

effective corrective action when students allege bullying or mistreatment by others.

### **Q: What are the essentials of a good investigation?**

**A:** An investigation should be tailored to the particular situation and should be done promptly and thoroughly by an individual trained to recognize bullying, harassment and discriminatory behaviors. The person should also know how to question staff and students about such allegations in an appropriate manner. It is important to discern when mistreatment is caused or motivated by the protected class of the victim. Thus, knowing what names were used in name-calling incidents, for example, is important. Do those words have racial connotations? Are they slang which has religious implications for the victim? Were gestures used which students may interpret as significant in some manner related to sexual orientation? Etc.

### **Q: How can districts prevent bullying and mistreatment in its schools?**

**A:** Training of all involved and constant enforcement is key to stopping undesirable behavior of any kind in the school building or at school events. All staff, parents, students and administration must be clear about the fact that such mistreatment of students by students will not be tolerated.

### **Q: How can staff avoid being sued or prevent the district from being sued?**

**A:** One cannot prevent the filing of legal actions, ultimately. However, prevention measures may reduce the chances that this could happen. Further, careful policy education and enforcement may mitigate the effects and the likelihood that such litigation will succeed.

*This article is intended to provide 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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## Reflections

### The 2010 MASA/MASE Spring Conference

I believe that most of the members of our organization would agree with the statement that “the success of a school or district is only as effective as the administrator that leads it.” I think that most of us would also agree that successful leadership is enhanced when we have staff development opportunities that add value to what we do in our professional lives.

With these thoughts in mind, MASA staff and the MASA Executive Committee sought to offer members a spring conference designed to deliver customized leadership development opportunities. The intent was to strike a balance between lecture, participation, and application in a format designed to meet the preferred learning styles and professional needs of those attending the conference. From my perspective, the MASA organization succeeded in meeting the needs of its members.

The conference offered something for every member. Large group presentations covered topics such as the “global achievement gap,” “character and competence,” and “community conversations.” Fifteen or so breakout sessions focused on topics relevant to our work and interests, and a new feature, round-table discussions, gave members a chance to learn about things such as copyright laws, special



Jeff Olson  
Superintendent  
MASA Executive Development  
Committee Chair; and  
MASA President-Elect

education due process, and environmental leadership.

To me, one of the most beneficial features was the “reality check” session facilitated by Greg Vandal, the 2009 Polaris Award recipient. Greg’s presentation helped attendees take what was learned during the conference and develop a plan to implement some of the ideas in home schools and districts.

The end result is that we got to hear some of the latest research and best thinking in the field of education, we had a chance to learn about “best practices” tied to the research, we had an opportunity to review and discuss pertinent topics with expert facilitators, and we were given a format to apply what we learned to the students, parents, and communities we serve.

In the end, the goal of providing options to help us all to become more effective leaders was achieved.

MASA and MDE present ...

#### The Back-to-School Conference Wednesday, August 4th, 2010 Northland Inn Hotel

Join us for the annual Back-to-School Conference for superintendents on Wednesday, August 4th. MDE updates, great speakers and a chance to network with your colleagues are all a part of the agenda.

Registration Materials will be sent soon - watch your email for them or visit the MASA website at <http://www.mnasa.org> --  
**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

*See you August!*

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**ACHIEVING OUR CLIENTS' GOALS SINCE 1947**

## Helping Administrators Assess Threats of School Violence The Minnesota School Safety Center

**W**hether it is a threatening facebook post, rumors of a weapon in school, or disturbing writings found in a student's journal, administrators are often faced with threats of potential school violence. While all threats must be evaluated on an individual basis and responded to appropriately, the process of assessing school threats is one administrators do not have to face alone.

Threat assessment for schools is a fact-based process developed by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education that helps schools evaluate and assess potentially threatening students or situations. Based on the 2002 Safe School Initiative, the threat assessment inquiry attempts to prevent school violence by encouraging schools to increase awareness and examine potentially threatening behaviors using an integrated team approach.

School threat assessment is not intended to profile or seek out students who exhibit certain traits, but rather to assist schools in evaluating student behaviors or reports of threatened violence. When conducting a threat assessment, the central question to keep in mind is whether a student's behavior poses a threat—not simply whether a student makes a threat.

### **Breaking the code of silence— Establishing a culture of respect**

According to the Safe School Initiative, 81% of the time at least one person had information about a student's plans prior to a school attack. In almost every case that individual was a fellow student, sibling or peer. Students must feel comfortable reporting information to a trusted adult and know that breaking the "code of silence" is essential to keeping the school safe. Students and teachers must also be trained to look for behaviors or activities that appear suspicious and know what to do when they observe or have information about potential violence.

### **Designate a central point of contact**

When threatening behavior is observed or discovered, students, staff and parents need to know immediately how to report the information. A central point of contact must be designated as the person responsible for receiving reports of potential violence. Upon receiving the information, the central point of contact will evaluate and determine whether to initiate a threat assessment inquiry.

### **Conducting a threat assessment inquiry**

If the central point of contact deems a threat is credible and concerning, he or she will gather the threat assessment team and initiate a threat assessment inquiry. While the process should be initiated immediately, the primary consideration must be the safety of the school. If time does not allow, and suspected violence is imminent, law enforcement should be

contacted immediately.

Time permitting, the threat assessment team should assemble within hours of receiving a reported threat and initiate the inquiry process. Ideally the threat assessment team is comprised of school or district administrators, social workers, school psychologists or counselors, the school resource officer or law enforcement and teachers or members of community organizations who have a relationship with the student. Each individual's diverse perspective is critical to establishing a more complete picture of the student and assessing the likelihood of violent behavior.

The threat assessment team collects and analyzes facts about the student of concern through a comprehensive inquiry process. A threat assessment toolkit and inquiry worksheet, which guides the threat assessment inquiry, is available on the Minnesota School Safety Center website <http://www.mnssc.state.mn.us>.

### **Managing the threat**

At the conclusion of the threat assessment inquiry, determinations must be made on how to best manage the threatening student or situation. Students may face legal or disciplinary consequences and may require counseling or support to deal with unresolved problems. Potential victims may need protection or assistance. Each situation will have to be dealt with individually and plans must be made for long and short term considerations.

### **Establishing board policy**

Before conducting a threat assessment inquiry, it is critical that schools or districts have clear school board policies in place establishing the threat assessment inquiry process to avoid any potential legal issues. Questions about your district's policy should be directed to your legal counsel.

Threats of school violence will likely remain a challenge for school administrators, but acts of violence have been thwarted by the systematic reporting and assessing of potential threats.

For more information about school threat assessment or for free training on threat assessment in schools please contact the Minnesota School Safety Center at 651-201-7400 or <http://www.mnssc.state.mn.us>.

—Jill Eulberg, School Safety Specialist, School Safety Center Program, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

# EDUCATIONAL CAREERS

## Find Your Job Candidates at the MASA Jobsite!

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With strong district participation, candidates also flock to the site, making it is easier for the districts to find quality candidates and we create a win-win situation.


Currently the MASA Jobsite has 538 candidate profiles and in most cases their resumes. These candidates are licensed in

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Visit us today at <http://jobsitemnasa.org/> to join the MASA Jobsite and find a candidate today for that hard-to-fill position!

For any questions please contact us at 651•645•6272 / [jobs@mnasa.org](mailto:jobs@mnasa.org) / Jeanna Quinn

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# LEADER'S NOTES

## Enjoying Denver Colorado The National Conference on Education

The AASA Spring Leadership Conference was held in Denver Colorado at the beginning of May. In attendance were many of the president-elects of the state associations and their executive directors. For the case of Minnesota, Jeff Olson and myself along with our spouses Judy and Dianne attended this conference. We learned a lot, enjoyed each others company, and found out quite a bit about Denver as we will be having our national conference there this coming February.

Denver is an ideal location for a large conference. The Convention Center is located right in the downtown area that is filled with restaurants and shops. It is easy to get around and explore the area since Denver has a very good transportation system.

The National Conference on Education is scheduled for February 17-19, 2011. Interestingly the lowest precipitation month in Denver is February with an average temperature around 35°F. They do have an occasional snowstorm but when they come they melt very quickly. If you are interested in attending the National Conference on Education not only will you enhance your professional growth, but also you will find yourself in a city where it is very enjoyable to interact with your colleagues and to see the historic aspects of the city.

While we attended the Leadership Conference in May we flew into the Denver Airport which is located about 25 miles from the downtown. While you can take a shuttle or a taxicab we actually rented a car and drove into the city. We stayed at a downtown hotel and while there visited 4 or 5 other hotels that would typically be used by convention attendees next February. The headquarters hotel will be the Hyatt Regency, which is across the street from the Convention Center. All the other major hotels and secondary hotels are located within a few blocks of the Convention Center and there is a shuttle service that runs up and down 16th Street literally every few minutes so that it is easy to move around the downtown area.

16th Street is the downtown Pedestrian Mall. It is much like the Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis only about four times longer. It is filled with shops, restaurants, outdoor cafes, and people playing chess and dominos in the center meridian. It is easy to get around with the free shuttle buses available that run the mile-long mall every 90 seconds.

A fun happenstance for us was that on Saturday afternoon, with time off from our meetings, we along with Judy and Dianne went to visit the oldest hotel in downtown Denver, the Brown



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of School  
Administrators

Palace Hotel. It happened to be Kentucky Derby Day and the main area of the hotel where they serve afternoon tea was filled with well-dressed men and women with large hats. Since tea was not our particularly favorite drink we found the Ship Tavern restaurant in that hotel. We drank Mint Juleps and watched the Kentucky Derby sitting at an age-old bar carved of old oak surrounded by the glass and mirrors of a historic establishment. It was an enjoyable hour of our afternoon.

We were also amazed at the wide variety of restaurants and the quality of them. Denver is a fairly casual city so most people were dressed in a casual fashion even within some of the best restaurants. In fact it is only the restaurant in Brown Palace Hotel in all of downtown Denver where you are required to wear a suit and tie. Each evening as we went out we found waiters and waitresses to be especially knowledgeable and friendly and the food was excellent.

A good portion of Denver's downtown is called "LoDo" and stands for Lower Downtown Historic District. This area has been very nicely restored and Coors Field, INVESCO Field, and the Convention Center border it. It is a great place to wander around and see the people as well as to visit the stores and restaurants. The only place I would keep you away from is the Twisted Kilt Irish Pub, although I will have to admit we were lured inside for a Coors Light early one evening.

Consider attending the National Convention on Education you will learn a lot, hear great speakers, and also enjoy the ambiance of this great western city, Denver Colorado.



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The National Conference on Education is the place to learn new approaches and challenge your thinking. At the conference you will get a 360-degree perspective from public school systems large and small, urban, suburban and rural, and you'll have the opportunity to talk to your peers face-to-face about their best practices. In addition, a visit to the NCE Marketplace will allow you to see first-hand the products and services that offer solutions to your day-to-day school system needs.

*Registration and Housing open on July 1st - mark your calendar and visit [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org). See you in Denver!*

# MASA FOUNDATION

## Making Giving A Priority

**T**he MASA Charitable and Educational Foundation has continued to grow its assets through the generous gifts of members, retired members, and friends for the past several years. Our annual Fall Conference Golf Tournament and Spring Conference Silent Auction also continue to provide a stable source of revenue for the Foundation. These resources have helped fund the start of the annual Great Start Workshops, the Fresh Start Workshops and the new Stages for Sages Workshop.



The Grant requests are made to the MASA Executive Director and are reviewed by the Foundation Executive Committee.

As you are making your personal professional development plans, please keep in mind the Foundation Grant option. We realize everyone's access to funds to support their professional growth is not the same and the MASA Foundation wants to partner with the members to grow and develop the skills of our current school leaders. Remember, we are

all in the business of advocating for Learning for a Lifetime.

—John Christiansen, MASA Foundation President & Superintendent, Intermediate School District 916

In addition to professional development opportunities provided to MASA members, the Foundation also provides Foundation Grants to members needing assistance with an individual professional development activity. The Foundation Board approves a dollar total each year to be used for Grant requests.

## STAFF PROFILE

### Mary Law

**Job Title:** Associate for Leadership Support

**How long have you been with MASA:** Ten Years.

**Tell us about your loved ones (spouse, significant other, children):** I have been married to my husband Michael for almost 16 years. We live on the Eastern edge of St. Paul near the 3M Corporate Headquarters. Mike and I are blessed with three daughters. Our oldest, Maggie, is 8 and is a 2nd grader at Carver Elementary in Maplewood. She plays the piano and dances. She has a witty sense of humor and is a great big sister. Our second daughter, Molly, is 3. She loves to lip sync to Hannah Montana and Taylor Swift songs. She also has a beautiful personality and a caring spirit. Mallory, our youngest daughter, is 1. She is a constant surprise every day. She thinks that she can do everything her older sisters do – especially climbing to the highest point possible in our house.



**What do you like most about working for MASA:** I love the relationships that I have built with all of our members, school administrators, business partners and retirees over the years.

**Favorite Memories at MASA:** I have many, but the ones that stick out the most are ones at conferences and retreats held at Madden's. Being at Madden's is such a wonderful venue for getting to know everyone better. Plus, it's fun to sing karaoke or get your palm read in the Pub.

**One thing you would like the members of MASA to know about you:** That although I have decided to leave MASA and pursue a career within a school district, the memories that I have of the people I have met are very precious to me. I will miss each of you!

# POST SECONDARY OPTIONS

## College for Everyone? Go Figure.

**A**n uneasy tension has existed in Minnesota between public school districts and colleges since the inception of the post secondary enrollment legislation. The primary reason is the flow of dollars away from school districts due to the loss of student enrollment and the corresponding state foundation aid when a high school student enrolls in a P.S.E.O. program at a college or university. Clearly it is a desirable option to allow students to earn credit towards completion of their high school diploma and college credit while enrolled in a course via dual credit programs. However, Superintendents do lament the loss of revenue to colleges and universities that enroll P.S.E.O. students.

As a result many school districts are actively or passively encouraging students to eschew P.S.E.O. and choose courses from an array of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, College In The School and similar programs in their home high school.

Dr. Larry Litecky, President of Century College, commissioned an investigation of the impact of P.S.E.O. and other concurrent enrollment programs on local school districts and to develop a model to “hold harmless” school districts with students participating in these programs. The primary focus of the study was on Minnesota policy and practice. To that end, the investigative stage of the study was conducted by meeting with school district leaders, Minnesota Department of Education officials, school finance experts and with Jim Sheehan along with Ann Thomas from SchoolFinances.Com who provided data analysis. A scan of practices in other States contiguous to Minnesota or who have demonstrated new and innovative ideas in the area of dual enrollment was also a part of the study.

**Chasing the money.** Parents and students are particularly drawn to the possibility of reducing their potential college costs by shortening their path to a college degree by a few credits or a full year or more. A December of 2009 Public Agenda survey entitled “Squeeze Play: How Parents and the Public Look at Higher Education Today” revealed 83% of survey respondents agreed with the statement that students have to borrow too much money to pay for college. The survey data suggests conflicting trends of an increasing belief that college is essential to success against a sentiment that college is too costly for many. This fixation on college costs is reflected in an increasing number who view colleges as more concerned with the bottom line and operating as a business rather than primarily making sure students have a good educational experience. 60% of survey respondent now agree with this statement which is an increase of 8% in just two years. The popularity of Advanced Placement, College In The Schools, and International Baccalaureate have sky rocketed in the past few years. This rapid expansion was also fueled by the desire of school districts to maintain enrollment of 11th and 12th grade students within their high schools and budgets. For example:

- Since 2004 the number of Minnesota students participating in A.P. exams has doubled with over 60% of the students scoring well enough to earn college credit.
- 24.4% of Minnesota public high school students in the class of 2009 took at least one A.P. exam compared to 16.2% in 2004.
- The number of students in International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme grew from 1,478 in 2006 to 2,204 in 2010.
- The number of I.B. test participants grew from 3,071 to 4,991 in the same time period.
- College In The Schools program offerings have mushroomed and the cost of these programs are increasingly being negotiated via competitive shopping by school districts between competing college partners.

**What about P.S.E.O.?** According to data provided by the Minnesota Department of Education and compiled by SchoolFinances.Com, the level of participation of P.S.E.O. students from public school districts has taken a step backwards over the past ten years. Everyone involved in the study noted the number of students participating in P.S.E.O. has leveled or shown a slight decline. This finding was supported by Minnesota Department of Education P.S.E.O. Program Specialist, Jessica Rowe, who also noted the number of home schooled students participating in P.S.E.O. has increased over the past ten years. Approximately one-third of current P.S.E.O. students come from home schools. Students are also increasingly using a hybrid collection of P.S.E.O., A.P. courses, C.I.S. courses and I.B. to earn dual credit.

Every full time equivalent student who leaves the local high school to participate in a P.S.E.O. program carries with them a loss of revenue equal to 88% of the current State Foundation Aid. States such as Florida and Texas have recognized this financial policy flaw and now provide full enrollment and full funding for the student to both the school district and the public college or university. They point to the fact that funding both institutions has led to greater efficiency through coordination of course catalogs and curriculum by both the school district and college/university.

In Minnesota, the cost of tuition paid to colleges and universities exceeds the loss of revenue to local school districts. A little over \$22,000,000 is paid by the State of Minnesota to Minnesota colleges enrolling P.S.E.O. students while it is calculated that local school districts lose approximately one-half of this amount in reduced State Aid. To fully fund P.S.E.O. loss revenue to school districts would be miniscule. For example using a local option property tax to replace this

Continued on Page 15

## College for Everyone? Continued from page 14

revenue was calculated using 2008-09 data and revealed a property tax increase of 92 cents per \$100,000 of taxable value in a school district with a relatively high P.S.E.O. participation rate.

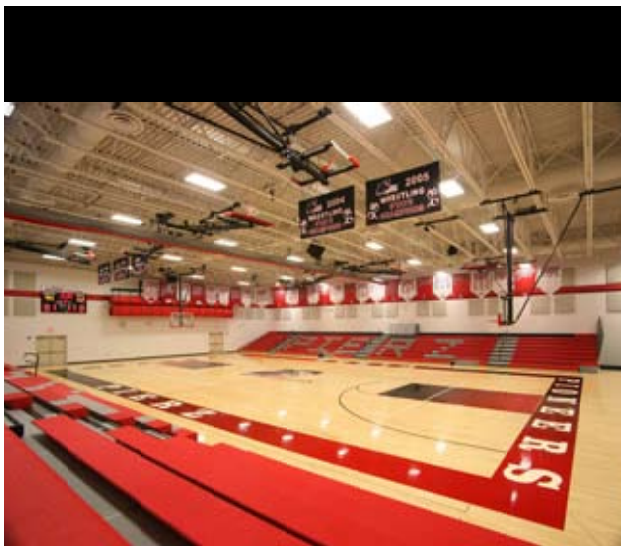
**The future.** Unlike several other states, Minnesota has a high level of flexibility within its dual enrollment programs but this flexibility may need to be expanded to benefit students. As a result of this study it appears that in order for Minnesota to keep pace with other States the following should be considered for future implementation in Minnesota:

- Expanding the number of college courses delivered within high schools taught by college staff or a combination of college and high school staff.
- Delivery of traditional college remediation courses as a part of P.S.E.O. on the college campus or within high schools via P.S.E.O. and/or C.I.S. courses.
- Creation of “early college high schools” aimed at serving populations of students who are most likely to not succeed in college.

- Development of common course catalogs and curriculum within K-12 school districts and Minnesota public colleges and universities.
- Offering more on-line courses as a part of P.S.E.O. course offerings.
- Expand the number of independent cooperative agreements between local school districts and colleges to provide dual enrollment programs to include P.S.E.O
- Funding both the school district and college for students enrolled in P.S.E.O. - or -
- Allowing local school boards the flexibility of levying a P.S.E.O. encouragement tax to offset the loss of revenue for students participating in P.S.E.O.

College and skill training for everyone might be a lofty goal used for political or perhaps pedagogical rhetoric. The reality is we need to make significant changes to create a more seamless system between K-12 and collegiate education to achieve this goal. Clearly there are opportunities to make policy decisions that also make sense...or is it cents...financially.

–Ted Blasiesing, Retired, White Bear Lake Schools, and MASA Past President



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# RETIREMENT OPTIONS

## Reemployment After Retirement

**M**any school leaders are now considering retirement from the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) system and then are being rehired either in their current school district or in another school district. This is legal and we suspect quite a number of our members will continue to do this.

There are a number of alternatives that you can consider once you reach the Rule of 90 and want to continue to work. One very good option is to simply continue to work and not take your retirement at that time. For each additional year that you work and continue to be an active TRA member the pension benefit that you eventually take will increase significantly.

There are also a number of alternatives if you choose to retire from TRA and then become reemployed. Again, each of these options has advantages and disadvantages and this is a complex decision to make. The head retirement counselor at TRA is Mr. Mark Wirtanen and he is especially versed on the nuances for retirement for school superintendents. He is willing to meet with any superintendent coming upon the Rule of 90 decision. You can reach Mark Wirtanen directly by calling him at 651-282-9939 or you can call and make an appointment with him at the St. Paul TRA office 651-296-6523.

If you decide to retire and begin collecting your pension and want to be reemployed you are not allowed to enter into contract in advance with a school district prior to the actual retirement, unless you are over 62 years of age. If you are under the age of 62 you can have verbal discussions but can only enter into the contract after retirement occurs. If you are over 62 years old you are allowed to actually sign a written agreement ahead of time.

If you are retired you may choose to be reemployed by a school district. If you do this you will continue to have a contract with the district that would also indemnify you in the case that there is a lawsuit in the school district in which you are named. You would draw salary but neither you nor your school district would need to make contributions to TRA.

There is a limitation on the amount that you earn, although you will eventually receive all of your money. Generally the rule says that the first \$46,000 that a person earns does not affect your pension. After that one of every two dollars you earn will be deducted from your pension payments the following year but will then be returned to you the year after that. Here is an example of how that would work over several years:

Assume that you earn \$96,000 each year for a period of years after retirement.

	Salary	Approx. Pension	Pension Money Withheld	Pension Money Reimbursed	Total Compnstr.
<b>Year 1</b>	\$96,000	\$60,000	\$0	\$0	\$156,000
<b>Year 2</b>	\$96,000	\$35,000*	25,000*	\$0	\$131,000
<b>Year 3</b>	\$96,000	\$60,000**	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$156,000
<b>Year 4</b>	\$96,000	\$60,000**	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$156,000
<b>Year 5</b>	\$0				
<b>(Fully Retired)</b>	\$85,000	\$0	\$25,000	\$85,000	
<b>Year 6</b>	\$0	\$60,000	\$0	\$0	\$60,000

\*The amount of the pension withheld is calculated by taking the \$96,000 salary minus \$46,000 which is \$50,000 and dividing by 2.

\*\*The pension amount includes some money withheld in the current year and a reimbursement of the amount withheld from the previous year.

Another option is to provide contracted services to your school district. There are two ways to do this. You can set up your own Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) as a sole proprietorship. This is done through the Secretary of State's Office. It costs around \$140 to register yourself as an LLC and you can go online and get the forms to fill them out yourself. If you prefer to have an attorney fill the forms out for you the charge is about \$300 in attorneys fees.

You would then have the school district contract with the LLC for superintendent services. In doing this you avoid the issue of the pension delay with TRA. If you are an LLC you are essentially self-employed so when you do your taxes you will have the responsibility of paying your Social Security payments (FICA) for both the employee and the employer. You also lose your indemnification by the school district.

If you do not want to set up your own LLC you can work with one of several firms that will set up the contract with the school district for you. Again you will have responsibility for both sides of Social Security payments (employer and employee) and you will also need to pay the firm a fee for those services.

Thus, there are several ways to continue to work once you reach the Rule of 90. You might remain an active member of the TRA system gaining increased future pension benefits. You may retire and still be employed by the school district but will probably experience the pension delay issue

Continued on Page 17



# ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to the following candidates who have been elected to MASA leadership positions. Newly elected leaders participated in a planning session with the full MASA Board of Directors this spring. MASA appreciates these leaders for their commitment to MASA and Minnesota education and offers them thanks and best wishes as they begin their terms of service.

**President-Elect:** Kelly Smith, Belle Plaine

**Board Members:**

- Region 1—David Krenz, Austin
- Region 3—David Marlette, Tracy
- Region 8—Larry Guggisberg, Roseau
- Region 9—Deirdre Wells, Inver Grove Heights
- Greater MN Central Office – Wayne Kazmierczak, Moorhead
- Metro Area Central Office – Nancy Allen-Mastro, Bloomington
- Metro Area Curriculum – Barb Knudsen, Lakeville

**Minnesota Representative to the AASA Governing Board**

Luther Heller, Montevideo

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

**2010-11 Committee Chairs and Chair-Elects:**

*Legislative Committee*

Jerry Ness, Fergus Falls, Chair  
Todd Sesker, Cannon Falls, Chair-Elect



Kelly Smith  
Superintendent  
MASA President-Elect  
2010-2011

*Legislative Sub-Committee - Policy*

Rick Ellingworth, Redwood Falls, Chair  
John Engelking, Proctor, Chair-Elect

*Legislative Sub-Committee - Finance*

Ric Dressen, Edina, Chair  
Dennis Carlson, Anoka-Hennepin, Chair-Elect

*Legislative Sub-Committee - Pensions & Contracts*

Todd Meyer, Jackson County Central, Chair  
Kathy Kelly, Columbia Heights, Chair-Elect

*Legislative Sub-Committee - Contact*

Daron VanderHeiden, Hutchinson, Chair  
Paul Brownlow, Verndale, Chair-Elect

*Executive Development Committee*

Corey Lunn, Montgomery-Lonsdale, Chair  
Lynne Kovash, Moorhead, Chair-Elect

*Member Services Committee*

John Schultz, Hopkins, Chair  
Mark Porter, South Washington County, Chair-Elect

*Nominating Committee*

Larry Guggisberg, Roseau, Chair  
Chris Sonju, Glencoe-Silver Lake, Chair-Elect

*Federal Advocacy Committee*

Terry Quist, Alexandria, Chair  
Nancy Rajanen, Waconia, Chair-Elect

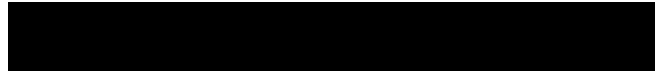


**Mark Your Calendar!**

**The 2010 MASA Foundation Golf Tournament is right around the Fairway!**

The annual MASA Foundation Golf Tournament is fast approaching. Mark your calendar for **Sunday, October 3**. It will be held at Madden's Resort in Brainerd.

**See you in Brainerd!**



**Reemployment After Retirement**  
Continued from page 16

as required by TRA or you may provide your services to the district on a contracted basis either through your own LLC or a company set up to provide that service for you.

As you start approaching the time when you may consider these options remember that Mark Wirtanen at TRA is a very good resource to help you look at all the various options. You will want to study them carefully to decide which is the most appropriate for you. The correct option may well depend on your age at the point of retirement and the number of years you choose to work.

—Charlie Kyte, Executive Director, MASA

# NEWS FROM THE FIELD

## Grading for Learning

The practice in schools of basing student grades on aspects other than the student actually showing evidence that predetermined outcomes were actually achieved is long-standing and ingrained in our educational culture. Teachers have used this method for decades, if not a century or more. Parents understand it and many students learn to manipulate it. Earning an “A” because of strong classroom work ethic, teacher-pleasing behavior, or completing extra homework is considered a positive outcome for many students who know how to earn “A’s” through these methods. We can assume that asking some of these students to begin to show evidence of actual learning of outcomes in order to receive that same grade will not always be met with enthusiasm.

But for some time now, a few brave teachers, departments, and even entire schools are undertaking the ethical work of grading for actual learning. That is, they are establishing performance outcomes up front and assessing whether or not students are making progress toward and meeting those outcomes. Although this process is easy to write about and talk about and it seems simple enough, it is challenging to implement. Let me rephrase that. It is extremely challenging to implement.

First, those undertaking this shift from grading based upon completed work or percentage of correct responses to grading based on what the student has learned, are taking on a change that most students and parents are not accustomed to. Students who are used to earning “A’s” might not earn them if they are actually graded on specific learning outcomes and a certain level of performance must be reached to get that “A”. They may have to engage in schoolwork in an entirely new way. Parents have to adjust to a different measure of their child’s performance in school that they may not be used to and have difficulty supporting in the ways to which they have become accustomed. Even colleagues may not be receptive to a change in grading practices. Asking teachers to make the shift from grading based on a percentage of correct responses to grading with a rubric that measures student performance of more complex outcomes or standards may be threatening to some if they have no experience with this method. One teacher in a high school math department who chooses to transform her grading practices to reflect student achievement of benchmarks may find herself instantly isolated.

The Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota (CLM), a component group of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), is focusing on this topic at the November 2010 CLM conference in Brainerd. The

conference themes and breakout sessions are centered on the idea of “Grading for Learning” and Ken O’Connor is the featured speaker. O’Connor’s book, How to Grade for Learning K-12, 3rd Edition, will be part of each participant’s registration package.

A national leader in education, researcher, and writer on the topic of grading, Ken O’Connor says that, “Much of what teachers do is because that is the way it was done to them; this is no longer good enough.” (O’Connor, 2009). This conference is intended to challenge participants to think about the ethics and authenticity of the grading practices in classrooms at their own schools and how to begin to move toward more meaningful and authentic grading practices.

–Barb Knudsen, Director of Teaching & Learning Services, Lakeville Area Schools and Metro Area Curriculum Component Group Representative to the MASA Board of Directors; and Barb Muckinhern, Director of Teaching and Learning, Princeton Schools and Greater Minnesota Curriculum Component Group Representative to the MASA Board of Directors



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# Congratulations!

Harold Remme, 2010 MASA Polaris Leadership Award Recipient

Mary Ann Nelson, 2010 MASA Richard Green Scholar Recipient

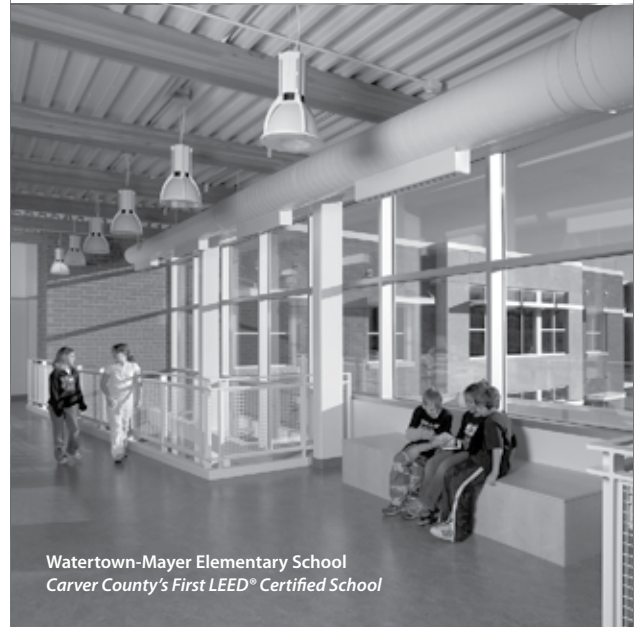
Harold and Mary Ann will be honored at the 2010 MASA Fall Conference. The Polaris Leadership Award is sponsored by Ehlers & Associates, Inc. and the Richard Green Scholar Award is sponsored by the Cunningham Group. Thank you for your generosity so that these two individuals are recognized for their educational leadership!



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## Going Paperless Equals Savings and Efficiency

*Schools go paperless with notification system... save thousands of dollars.*

### Snap-shot Overview

Savvy schools across the country have found an innovative way to save thousands of dollars, and increase income by using school notification systems to replace paper, ink and postage costs.

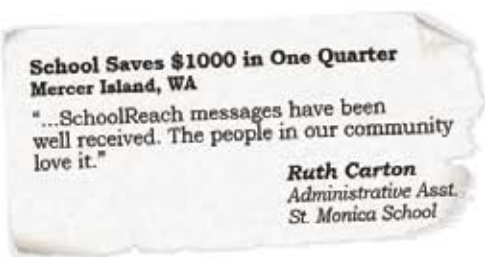
In an effort to cut costs, schools are using parent notification systems to reduce or eliminate paper handouts, reminders, report cards, flyers, or bulletins without jeopardizing communication. Once thought of for only school cancellations and emergencies, parent notification systems are now a source of substantial savings. Here are some ideas from a few schools that have seen measurable savings by using SchoolReach® Instant Parent Contact®.



### Saving Thousands

St. Monica School in Mercer Island, Washington sent SchoolReach notifications in place of mailed and student-delivered items. The Result: Printing and paper expense went from over \$1,200.00 to just \$200.00 in one quarter. The notification system had swiftly paid for itself and the school was saving money and time. The school now uses SchoolReach to send out handbooks, information updates, and even the school directory.

"St. Monica's SchoolReach e-mails and messages have been well received. The people in our community love it..." says administrative assistant, Ruth Carton. St. Monica's is so pleased with the effectiveness of using SchoolReach; they are putting out a challenge to others in the Diocese of Seattle to join them in using notification systems to save paper and reduce costs.



### Parents Pay More Attention to Voice Notifications

Michael Butchko, Principal at Hillside Academy in New York, used the SchoolReach system to remind parents about outstanding tuition payments. By the next month, overdue tuition amounts were reduced by \$19,000 with no added mail or postage cost.

### Notification increases fund-raising success

Schools are now beginning to use notification systems to enhance development and increase fund-raising. Bishop Feehan Catholic School in Massachusetts used SchoolReach to send out a message that its annual toy drive was short of its goal. Within a few days after the message was sent out, the donations boomed from 500 toys to 4000 toys.



To learn more about SchoolReach and our cost efficient services please call 800-420-1479 or visit us at [www.schoolreach.com](http://www.schoolreach.com)

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## 2010...

### June

**17-18**

Board of Directors Retreat  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

### July

**5**

Independence Day Holiday Observed  
MASA Offices Closed

**21-22**

Great Start Workshop I  
The Venue, St. Paul

**29-August 1**

AASA Summer Leadership Institute  
Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill,  
Washington, D.C.

### August

**4**

MDE Back-to-School Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

**5**

Fresh Start Workshop III  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

**5-6**

MSBA Summer Seminar  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

**13**

Newsletter Submissions Due

**17**

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

### September

**6**

Labor Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

**22-24**

AASA Legislative Advocacy Conference  
Ritz Carlton Pentagon City,  
Arlington, VA

### October

**2**

MASA Executive Committee Meeting  
9:30-11:30 am  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd  
MASA Board of Directors Meeting  
1-5:30 pm  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**3**

MASA Board of Directors Meeting  
Continues  
9-11:30 am  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**3**

MASA Foundation Golf Tournament  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**3-5**

MASA Fall Conference  
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

**19**

Fresh Start Workshop IV  
MASA Board Room, St. Paul

**20**

Great Start Workshop II  
MASA Board Room, St. Paul

### November

**15**

Newsletter Submissions Due

**17-19**

Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota Fall  
Conference  
Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

**25-26**

Thanksgiving Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

### December

**1**

Great Start Workshop III  
MASA Board Room, St. Paul

**4-7**

TIES 2010 Education Technology  
Conference  
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Minneapolis

**8**

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

**24, 27 & 31**

Winter Holidays Observed  
MASA Offices Closed

## 2011... January

**3**

Winter Holiday Observed  
MASA Offices Closed

**4**

Minnesota Legislative Session Begins  
Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul

**6**

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

**12**

MSBA Early Bird Workshops  
Hilton Hotel, Minneapolis

**13-14**

MSBA Winter Convention  
Minneapolis Convention Center

### February

**15**

Newsletter Submissions Due

**17-18**

AASA National Convention on  
Education  
Denver, CO

### March

**16**

MASA Executive Committee Meeting  
9-10:45 am  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center  
MASA Board of Directors Meeting  
11 am-4 pm  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

**16**

MASA Past Presidents & Board of  
Directors Dinner  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

**17-18**

MASA & MASE Spring Conference  
Northland Inn, Brooklyn Center

## April

**21**

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

**22**

Spring Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

## May

**13**

Newsletter Submissions Due

**30**

Memorial Day Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

## June

**TBA**

MASA Board of Directors Retreat  
Venue TBA, St. Paul



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