

# Leaders FORUM

Winter 2008

## Dr. Dennis Peterson Minnesota Superintendent of the Year

**T**he Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has chosen Dr. Dennis Peterson, Superintendent for the Minnetonka Schools, as 2009's Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

As Minnesota's honoree, Dr. Peterson will also be a candidate for the National Superintendent of the Year award, which will be announced at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) convention on February 20, 2009 in San Francisco, Calif.

Superintendent of the Year nominees are evaluated on how they demonstrate the following qualities:

- Leadership for learning—creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication skills—strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- Professionalism—constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community involvement—active participation in local community activities and understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Dr. Peterson was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. "Dennis Peterson is truly



Dr. Dennis Peterson  
Superintendent for the  
Minnetonka Schools

an exemplary leader," says Dr. Charles Kyte, MASA's Executive Director. "He is a skilled collaborative leader who knows how to help his district community envision positive change and chart a course for achievement. We are proud to have Dennis represent Minnesota's superintendents as Superintendent of the Year."

Dr. Peterson has been superintendent for the Minnetonka Schools since 2001. With an enrollment of 8,140 students, Minnetonka's nine schools serve students in ten suburban communities southwest of Minneapolis, plus 933 students who are allowed to open-enroll under Minnesota law. The district's students come primarily from middle-class and upper-middle-class families.

Since 2000, the District has had above average student test performance, and has steadily climbed to nationally competitive levels on ACT and SAT scores. The addition of IB in 2003 and language immersion (Spanish and Chinese) in 2007 has added to the quality of the schools.

Since 2001, Dr. Peterson has secured significant financial support for district initiatives through a series of successful operating levies. His vision for technology has propelled the District to be nationally recognized as a leader in using technology for communications and instruction,

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contributing to the District's ability to attract both families and staff into the District. By implementing four key initiatives, Dr. Peterson has successfully balanced the District's budget, passed referenda, attracted open enrollment students and restructured the District's debt by improving services and reducing expenses.

Dr. Peterson was nominated for the Superintendent of the Year Award by the Minnetonka School Board. "It is Dr. Peterson's leadership and his willingness to 'do what it takes' to meet the needs of the children in our community that has earned such a high level of credibility," says Minnetonka School Board Chair Pamela Langseth. "The Minnetonka School District is fortunate to have Dr. Peterson leading the charge focused on world-class child-centered excellence."

Dr. Peterson is especially noted for his personal commitment to excellence in student achievement and fiscal responsibility. Living by his motto of "Children First," Dr. Peterson has inspired others within the District to also put children first. This commitment has yielded outstanding results in student performance.

When asked what the theme for the Superintendent of the Year Award, "Democracy's Promise: Educate Every Child" means to him, Dr. Peterson responded: "The incredible power of America is the opportunity it offers for everyone who lives here to achieve great results for themselves and their families. The foundation for that opportunity for success is secured by our public schools. Because we welcome every child to our schools, we create an incredible dynamic for the growth, learning and achievement of every child who attends the public schools."

Dr. Peterson goes on to say: "The outstanding results achieved for every student do not just happen. Great outcomes are the result of leadership in each public school district by superintendents and their assistants. We have developed a powerful commitment from one generation to the next. Every generation has the responsibility and obligation to insure the education of future generations. Breaking that cycle would surely destroy 'Democracy's Promise'

and America's foundation!"

Dr. Peterson was also asked how he has creatively used technology as a communication tool within his district: "The Minnetonka District has become widely acknowledged for its incredible use of technology to communicate well with parents and staff members and to enable more powerful teaching and greater student learning. Changing the paradigm for technology in the District from learning about technology to learning how to use technology for communications and teaching and learning were exemplified through the use of a model classroom."

In a joint letter of support from the Minnetonka School District Community Leaders, Dr. Peterson is praised for "... [being] a tireless advocate for public education as the foundation for our democracy, and for the public schools as a gathering place for our community. In addition to being an outstanding educational leader—student achievement has increased by every measure during his tenure—Dr. Peterson is an involved and visible community leader. He is a champion for children and we are proud to have his leadership in Minnetonka Schools."

In a letter on behalf of the Minnetonka School District Legislative Delegation, Minnesota State Senator Terri Bonhoff praised Dr. Peterson's leadership: "Dr. Peterson has brought innovation to the classroom using state of the art technology to re-engage the student learning community. One has only to walk through the halls of these schools to feel the excitement of young people deeply engaged in learning. The culture he has built in partnership with his school community is collaborative not competitive, inquisitive not arrogant. Dennis is the kind of leader who has inspired parents to be directly engaged in their children's education, knowing that parents are the key to student success."

Dr. Peterson received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado, and he holds master's and bachelor of science degrees from the University of South Dakota. Before becoming Superintendent for the Minnetonka Schools, he was superintendent for six other school districts, including the Southland Schools in Adams, Minn. He was also an Assistant Superintendent for the Mounds View Schools.



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## It Takes All of Us Accomplishing the Advocacy of MASA

**T**hanks to all of you who connected with me in regards to my comments at our Fall Conference and in our Fall Leaders Forum newsletter. You have overwhelmingly provided affirmation that the work of MASA continues to move in the right direction, advocating for the students of Minnesota.

Your comments and questions included: "Will MASA advocate for students with the philosophy of positive and constructive information that might 'spill the milk' from time to time, or is MASA milk-toast, having neither taste nor substance?"

Another comment I received is that "The students of Minnesota are worth the fight and occasional anxiety."

In reviewing drafts of the work of our Legislative and Federal Advocacy Committees in preparation for our MASA Board meeting, I am confident that our positions will provide a "push" but also will be balanced with a degree of reason that will be necessary for our advocacy to be respected. You are a big part of the reason I am so confident in our collective direction. The positions our Board adopts will have evolved out of more direct membership involvement, by more of our members, than ever before.

Moving our platform into the public arena will allow us to be united on behalf of students. It will enable us to collectively gird ourselves against the inevitable criticism such advocacy will bring. Collectively, we must also be willing to incorporate ideas from others that strengthen our proposals, and to stand firm—and, yes, maybe even be uncompromising—when defensible initiatives are berated.

We should also be willing to endorse changes that will promote greater academic achievement for ALL of Minnesota's students. Finally, we must be willing to be accountable. This will help us enhance our state's mostly very capable and dedicated teachers and school support staff.

To accomplish our advocacy MASA must continue to maintain high visibility. My grandmother often reminded me that you increase your chances of getting what you want by asking. Thus, I'll ask for your commitment on three fronts:

We know from our experience in this past legislative session that we can have an impact. Our Legislative subcommittee will be asking each of us to commit to going to St. Paul at least three times during this long legislative session to engage our legislators on behalf of our students. Please commit to these very necessary visits.



Dan Brooks  
Superintendent  
MASA President

You'll soon be receiving a copy of a Federal Advocacy Committee resolution about Minnesota's continuing role with NCLB. When 100% of the school boards in our state adopt the resolution, we will send another united message. You are the leaders that will make such universal adoption happen.

In the mailing that includes our 2009 legislative platform, you will also find information on Management Concerned for Public Education. If we are to be successful in our advocacy for kids, it means being politically active. Please review this information and consider joining MCPE.

By law, MCPE membership must be outside of the regular MASA membership dues. MASA fees and other sources of association revenue cannot be used for political purposes, but maintaining a presence requires dollars. The benefits of MCPE membership include broad political support and recognition and information on the election/legislative process, candidates, and campaign activity.

To demonstrate my belief in MASA's political action arm, I issue this challenge:

I will increase my financial support of MCPE by \$5 for each new/first time MCPE member that joins MCPE with a \$50.00 membership, before February 1, 2009.

It takes all of us to do this and ensure our success as advocates for "world class" education opportunities for Minnesota's children in this time of global change!

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## ASSOCIATION NEWS

# Closing the Achievement Gap by Helping All Students to Read MASA is a Leader in Early Education Strategies

**R**oughly 80% of children in Minnesota schools learn to read successfully by about third grade via teaching techniques that, when well applied, result in success. For the smaller percentage of students who struggle to read, their educational careers become significantly more difficult and can be filled with a lack of success. MASA recognizes this problem, and our members are leaders in finding solutions.

Two years ago MASA brought together a small group of skilled early educators and asked them to develop a conference centered on the concepts that later came to be called Response to Intervention (RtI).

MASA's first RtI conference was held in Rochester in the fall of 2007 and was attended by over 600 educators from Minnesota and surrounding states. We decided that we would hold a second conference this past fall, and we



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association  
of School  
Administrators

were both amazed and gratified that so many people saw this idea, and this conference, as important. 875 people attended, and there were school districts from Minnesota that brought teams of up to 40 people to plan how they were going to change the system of interventions so that a greater percentage of children in their school districts could be successful readers.

At this past year's RtI conference we also hosted a policy strand with school board members and other policy leaders. They came together to discuss how they might change the policies within school districts and at the state level so that more of our students could be successful.

We are proud of the fact that MASA has been a leader in this initiative. We are trying to change the dynamics of education in the early years so that a greater percentage of students can experience success. We know this is not only a positive and effective direction for the students themselves, but is also a cost-effective solution. Students who are successful in reading will have fewer additional needs from either our school districts or our society as they grow up.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

### News From Our Special Education Colleagues

# Special Education Task Force Update

by Scott Hare  
Director of Special Services  
Belle Plaine, Jordan, and Montgomery-Lonsdale Schools

**L**ast spring, the Minnesota Board of Teaching decided to go forward with a Special Education Task Force to review special education licensure. The Board had two objectives: 1) To conduct a comprehensive review of Minnesota's licensure structure for serving students with exceptionalities, including both disabilities and gifts. 2) To make recommendations to the MN Board of Teaching regarding the preparation of special education teachers and all teachers serving students with exceptionalities. The process consists of three phases. Phase I, currently in process has members from several diverse groups and associations studying and discussing the current licensure standards and structure, their appropriateness, and what other states have in place for special education teacher licensure. Phase II would explore in smaller subgroups the recommendation from Phase I and develop draft recommendations for the Phase III group. The goal would be for the group to make

recommendations regarding teacher licensure for special education teachers to the Board's Advisory Committee in May, 2009.

Representing the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) are Scott Hare, Director of Special Services for Belle Plaine, Jordan, and Montgomery-Lonsdale; Eric Melbye, Director of Special Education for the Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative; and Renae Ouillette, Director of Special Services for Lakeville. Also involved is Lori Fildes, Director of Special Services for Wayzata representing the Association of Metropolitan School Districts. Nearly completing Phase I at the time of writing this article, I can comment that there has been a healthy and very respectful discussion on the current license structure and the core standards for special education teachers. With one meeting left, the group is coming to consensus in drafting a recommendation for the next phase. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact one of the above mentioned members of this task force.

# Finally! The Elections are Over— Now the Real Work Begins

**M**embers of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) are affected professionally at three levels by the results of the recent elections. First, there is a new federal administration that will be designing different approaches to the Federal Education Law. Second, we have newly elected members of the House of Representatives within the Minnesota Legislature. Along with the Governor, the legislature will be grappling with the need to provide funding and progressive laws for education while also working to solve a significant budget deficit. Finally, in many school districts, MASA members will begin meeting with new school board members beginning in January.

The Federal Education Law needs to be reauthorized. The MASA Federal Advocacy Committee will do its best to help guide the federal government's decisions. Hopefully the new law will become more supportive of—and less punitive to—public education.

MASA members will be engaged with their individual State senators and representatives to explain the MASA legislative platform, which will have a strong recommendation regarding the financing of schools. It will also address what appears to be a significant shortfall in the funding of the teacher's retirement pension plan.

MASA will propose several policy initiatives at the state level designed to progressively improve our students' chances for a good education. These policy initiatives include:

- a strategy to involve more parents and citizens in the education of our youth
- an effort to free schools from stifling mandates



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association  
of School  
Administrators

- a plea for more time to educate our children
- the implementation of several strategies to provide the best teachers for our students
- reform of the charter school laws

On a local level, MASA members must help to train and develop new school board members so they can be successful at governance. MASA members must establish good communication with board members and help them to understand the strategic plans that they must work on as a board. School leaders must help boards find ways to work together with unit cohesion so that they can make decisions for the greater good together.

MASA members have a lot on their plates as they do their jobs professionally, including helping to guide policy makers at the federal, state and local levels. The members of MASA are a progressive voice for public education in the state of Minnesota. As an association, it is important for us to look for emerging trends that help students be more successful, and to help our members and others become more skilled in delivering success for our students.

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## Recent Amendments to ADA May Present Challenges for Public Schools

Upcoming changes to the ADA may increase the number of disability discrimination claims brought against schools by employees and students. At a minimum, it is anticipated that the number of individuals claiming entitlement to protection under the ADA and Section 504 will increase. Therefore, it is important that school districts review and revise their disability discrimination policies to ensure that they are compliant with the recent ADA changes.

Furthermore, in light of the new changes, school districts need to update and train staff on how to determine ADA/504 eligibility and how to respond to requests for workplace accommodations from employees or to requests for disability-related educational support for students.

When the amendments to the ADA go into effect on January 1, 2009, they will broaden the definition of what it means to be “disabled” under the ADA and Section 504. Specifically, they will overturn prior Supreme Court precedents that narrowed the definition of “disability.” Under the Act, a person will need to show that they possess a “physical or mental impairment” that “substantially limits a major life activity.”



Tim Palmatier  
Attorney at Law  
Kennedy & Graven

Some of the more significant changes in the new law include:

- The definition of “disability” is required to be “construed in favor of broad coverage of individuals under this Act, to the maximum extent permitted by the terms of this Act.”
- Rejection of the Supreme Court’s standard that when determining disability, courts have to look at whether an individual’s impairment prevented the person from performing tasks that are of “central importance to most people’s daily lives.” Instead, the new law employs a more modest “major life activity” standard. Specifically, it adopts the major life activities that were covered under the old ADA/504 regulations, which included:

- caring for one’s self
- walking
- hearing
- breathing
- performing manual tasks
- seeing
- speaking
- learning and working

The new law also adds the following to the list of “major life activities:”

- eating
- standing
- bending
- concentrating
- sleeping
- lifting
- reading
- thinking and communicating

- The Act makes it clear that the operation of major bodily functions, including functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, and digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain respiratory, circulatory, endocrine and reproductive functions are “major life activities.”

- The law clarifies that “an impairment that substantially limits one major life activity need not limit other major life activities in order to be considered a disability that entitles a person to protection under the Act.” For example, an employer would not be able to argue that a worker is not disabled because their disability only affects their ability to sleep.

- The law requires that disability determinations be made without consideration of mitigating measures, such as medication, medical supplies, etc. However, ordinary eyeglasses/contact lenses are excluded from the mitigating measures provision.

- The new law states that “an impairment that is episodic or in remission is a disability if it would substantially limit a major life activity when active.”

- The new law also clarifies situations in which a person is entitled to ADA protections because the person is “regarded as having an impairment.”

### MASA Awards Recognize Outstanding Leadership

- Administrators of Excellence Award
- Kay E. Jacobs Award
- MASA Distinguished Service Award
- Richard Green Scholars Program
- Outstanding Central Office Leader Award
- Polaris Leadership Award

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

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

Nominations are due by January 30, 2009.



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## Power Points for Educational Leaders: Addressing Audiences Through Multiple Methods

### Keeping the Promise

As the African proverb says, “It takes a whole village to raise a child. We are the village and these are our children.” Our children are the promise for the future, and our promise to them is to identify and support an educational system that prepares all of its students for success in the global economy.

The **Minnesota’s Promise** project began in 2005, when 27 past and present school administrators came together to share strategies and build relationships across rural, urban and suburban lines. Since that time, more than 500 Minnesotans and a broad array of organizations have converged in large summits, small group meetings and countless conversations to provide input into what a successful system looks like and how we can achieve it. Here is what they discovered:



Shari Prest  
Ark Associates

■ The following two trends are major influences on what successful systems look like:

1. The emergence of the global knowledge economy, which demands that all citizens have high-level knowledge and skills that enable them to earn a living wage, and to take advantage of the opportunities available to well-educated Americans.
2. Changing demographics—including the increased number of students of color, students whose language is not English, and students living in poverty.

■ The challenge to schools is twofold:

1. Close the achievement gaps between Minnesota’s students and other students in the highest-performing nations.
2. Close the gaps that exist among students right here in Minnesota.

After many meetings, conversations, and a whole lot of research, 28 organizations whose work is related to children, families, schools, communities and post-secondary education agreed to work toward the following ten strategies as part of **Minnesota’s Promise**:

1. **Early Childhood Education.** This means investing in kids early in their lives so they are ready for school and eager to learn.
2. **Educator Quality.** Accomplishing the mission of Minnesota’s Promise will require that we have great

teachers, principals and superintendents who are prepared, supported and retained.

3. **Academic Rigor.** We need our schools and curriculums to challenge each student to learn at his or her highest possible level. Expectations, opportunities and instruction must be in place for that to happen.
4. **Family and Community Involvement.** Families and communities are very important in the success of students and learners. We need to make sure they participate as full partners in education.
5. **Multicultural Community.** Regardless of a child’s background, language, ethnicity, capacity, or family income, schools must ensure that all cultures are included and supported. We must reach across local and global cultural divisions to connect our learners to others.
6. **Data and Research.** Educators at all levels must make use of the information that is available to improve teaching and learning every day.
7. **Funding.** Schools need funding they can count on. Schools need funding that is equal to the quality of schools Minnesotans want.
8. **Time.** Schedules and calendars should be designed in ways that help kids reach high standards.
9. **Special Education.** Services for students with disabilities should be proactive, effective, efficient, and adequately funded.
10. **Health.** Parents and other stakeholders are important to student success. Parents and others need to do what they can to make sure that students come to school physically and mentally ready to learn.

**Minnesota’s Promise** is a clear vision for public education: Preparing all of our students for success in the global economy in world-class schools and a world-class state. It is an opportunity for all of us to come together to meet the needs of all learners and to help them become all that they can be.

Just as it will take all of us together to impact energy consumption, the economy, or the environment, it will take all of us together to improve our schools and our outlook for the future.

A PowerPoint to accompany Power Points is available to MASA, MESPA, MASSP members at your organizations’ websites. The most important thing is that you become a voice for education. These tools are intended to help you.

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## Professional Learning Communities: Shared Leadership for Teaching and Learning

**P**rofessional Learning Communities (PLCs) provide an opportunity to develop and nurture the profession of teaching. Implemented correctly, PLCs encourage professional growth and collective efficacy, resulting in improved student learning. Effective PLCs involve much more than creating a common meeting time for groups of teachers; they call for strong leadership that monitors and guides continuous changes, which in turn improve practices and procedures to meet the needs of all students.

Our book, *“Professional Learning Communities: An Implementation Guide and Toolkit,”* guides the development of shared leadership for PLCs. Used as an implementation guide and toolkit, our book supports increasing leadership capacity in schools and/or districts in a variety of ways:

- Teachers can increase student achievement, shape their own professional growth, work effectively with colleagues, become more accountable for results, and develop interdependence with other educators and leaders within their schools and districts.
- Teacher leaders can develop shared leadership and responsibility for increased student achievement, focus professional growth, shape effective interpersonal relationships in PLCs, and increase accountability and interdependence among educators and leaders in their schools and districts.
- Principals can strengthen instructional leadership that supports increased student achievement, coach for professional growth, develop effective structural and relational change in policies and practices, and assure accountability, interdependence, and sustainability for effective PLCs in their schools and districts.
- Superintendents and other district office leaders can align and support policies, practices, and resources needed by schools to develop effective PLCs, increase student and professional growth, and assure accountability, interdependence and sustainability for effective PLCs among schools within their districts.

Our book shares an overview of key concepts about effective PLCs and includes specific maps, tools, and techniques to monitor and coach effective changes in PLCs through several levels of innovation. We also offer specific systematic processes for developing, leading, and assessing sustainable PLCs. In addition, *“Professional Learning*



Jean Haar, MN State University, Mankato



Kitty Foord, MN State University, Mankato

*Communities: An Implementation Guide and Toolkit”* demonstrates our values and our commitment to the shared competence of teachers, leaders, and the teaching profession.

The basic intent of PLCs is to create an environment that respects and supports the knowledge and expertise of those who teach and lead, as opposed to setting up systems of control that dictate what needs to occur in teaching. As educators, we

share accountability for results, but along the way, we must also share accountability for our learning and relationships to achieve these results. Collaboratively setting goals for student learning, professional growth, and cultural and structural proficiency leads to shared responsibility for excellent results. This improved collaboration leads to:

- increased teacher proficiency in using research-based practices
- increased sense of belonging and efficacy for teachers and leaders
- increased sense of belonging and efficacy for students
- improved student achievement, regardless of demographics

*“Professional Learning Communities: An Implementation Guide and Toolkit”* helps leaders build effective, transparent professional learning communities in which all members have vital roles and responsibilities, and collaboratively share commitments to unleashing the best in themselves and their students.



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

## It's Time to Change the Federal NCLB Law

By Charlie Kyte

**T**he initial concept was good, but the implementation of NCLB was deeply flawed. America's public education systems have suffered more than is necessary in the minds of our public because of the punitive measures of this law. With the advent of a new administration, it's time to either repeal or change the law in the very near future.

The MASA Federal Advocacy Committee has developed a resolution that we hope every school district in the state of Minnesota will adopt. This resolution calls for significant changes in the Federal Education Law and further encourages the Minnesota Legislature to bring pressure to bear on federal officials in this regard.

Every school district will receive a copy of this resolution and a plea to adopt it by their school board in the near future. We are hoping to hear from all school districts by the end of March so that we can bring this resolution to our Congresspersons in Washington, D.C. in April.

The members of the Federal Advocacy Committee, along with the rest of our members, recognize that we must constantly improve the delivery of education to our children. Our membership also understands, and accepts, the need to help students that are struggling to be successful and that we need to prepare every student to be able to participate in some form of post-secondary education.

The MASA Federal Advocacy Committee will also be meeting with Minnesota's Senators and Congresspersons here in Minnesota and in Washington, D.C. Further, we will be seeking alignment with other education associations so that educators in Minnesota can speak with a single voice as they make recommendation for change of the Federal Education Law.

Please join with us by first adopting the resolution that has been designed by the Federal Advocacy Committee.

### RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, regardless of the intent of its authors, is deeply flawed and has created many negative consequences and attitudes in the minds of parents, citizens and educators while drawing precious funding away from direct instruction of our neediest students; and

WHEREAS, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of District or group \_\_\_\_\_) inherently recognize a moral obligation to continuously improve student outcomes for all students; and

WHEREAS, the current NCLB Act is currently a collection of 93 disjointed programs that would better serve children if organized to provide a seamless array of services and support for children in need; and

WHEREAS, attempts to fix existing flaws will inevitably lead to more bureaucratic complexity rather than

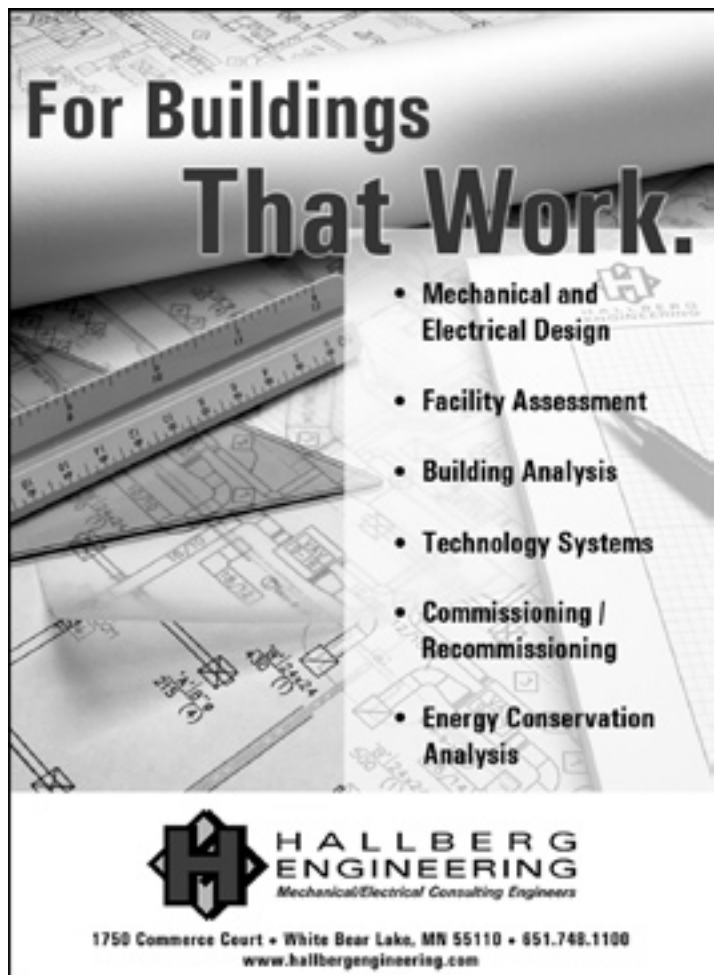
understandable simplicity; and

WHEREAS, standards and accountability systems are best assigned as the constitutional responsibility of States under broad federal expectations of quality rather than any attempt to create a 'one-size-fits-all' federal standard; and therefore be it now

RESOLVED that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of District or group) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby urges Congress to fundamentally reframe the structure of the Federal investment in K-12 education with a focus on serving low income and minority children; and be it further

RESOLVED that we urge the return of responsibility for student and school accountability to the individual States; and be it further

RESOLVED that we also urge the Minnesota Legislature and Governor to inform the Federal Government of Minnesota's intent to withdraw from participation in NCLB if a repeal, and reframing of the Statute is not completed by October, 2010.



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# MASA's POLITICAL ACTION CAMPAIGN

## Management Concerned for Public Education

# An Organization Worth Supporting

**M**anagement Concerned for Public Education (MCPE) is a political action group supported primarily by MASA members. Each year we ask the members of MASA to make a contribution so we have the ability to interact with legislators across the state.

In recent years, MASA has become a strong force for public education. MASA offers a strong and progressive legislative platform and has a constant presence at the State Capitol. Success at the State Capitol depends on the ability to work on a personal level with legislators and that's where MCPE can be very helpful.

Each of the party caucuses of the legislature raises money through receptions that happen prior to the



Charlie Kyte  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association  
of School  
Administrators

legislative session beginning and again after it ends. MCPE provides the funding for key members of our association to attend these caucus gatherings. Thus, you will regularly see the executive director, the lobbyist, and some of our members attending Republican and Democratic caucus gatherings for both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This relationship building is important in carrying forward the policy changes needed to create a progressive public education system.

Your contribution is important. It is also tax-deductible. We encourage members to participate by writing a check for \$100 or \$50 as a contribution to MCPE. As an organization we need to raise between \$5,000-\$7,000 per year in order to participate in these relationship building events.

See President Brook's Challenge on Page 3.



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## RICHARD GREEN SCHOLAR

# Karen Orcutt is MASA's 2008 Richard Green Scholar

**T**he Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Karen Orcutt, Superintendent of Orono Schools, as its 2008 Richard Green Scholar. Dr. Orcutt did present her research, "Characteristics of Resiliency in Leadership: Implications for Personal and Organizational Coping and Adapting Abilities," at MASA's annual statewide convention of school administrators this fall.

"I am so very honored," says Dr. Orcutt. "This is important research supporting administrators' abilities to be successful, both personally and professionally. I am privileged to receive the endorsement of my colleagues to produce work that might in turn support them."

The Richard Green Scholars Program, which is sponsored by MASA's business partner member, Cunningham Group Architecture, is an annual recognition of the research, writing, and presentation of a paper reflecting the practice of excellent school leadership. Scholar candidates apply for the program, and the recipient is selected by a subcommittee of MASA's Executive Development Committee. Established in 2006, the program is named for former Minneapolis Superintendent Richard R. Green, who modeled innovation and distinction in the child-centered practice of exemplary school leadership.

"MASA members value life-long learning, and a critical focus for us as a professional association is the promotion of personal and professional development," says MASA Executive Director Charlie Kyte. "Our goal is to support a professional learning community that inspires critical thinking and assessment of practice, and to recognize the importance of collegial relationships in professional development. The tradition of the presentation of our members' work at conferences is a reflection of those values, and Karen's research is a fitting model of the dedication to scholarship that is at the root of innovation in the practice of educational leadership."

"For many years, the business community has preached the mantra that 'schools should act more like business,'" says Cunningham President Tim Dufault. "In reality, the business world of today needs to act more like schools. Workers in the twenty-first century face increasing pressure from world forces demanding that they be more flexible, adaptable and capable of change. This need for flexibility forces workers to adapt and learn, which is critical for business success in a global economy. The Richard Green Scholarship allows

school leaders to research and share their expertise on this evolving world as both teachers and learners."



Former Richard Green Scholars are Dr. Diane J. Rauschenfels, Superintendent of Proctor Schools (2006) and Dr. Mark Wolak, Superintendent of Mahtomedi Schools (2007). Rauschenfels was recognized for her research, "Promoting Ethical Educational Leadership," and Wolak was recognized for his study, "Advancing Professional Practice for School Superintendents: Linking Effective Research with Effective Implementation."

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



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Earth Schools

**Ms. Lora Arnott**  
Director of Special  
Education  
Faribault Schools

**Dr. Marsha Baisch**  
Superintendent Intern  
Eden Prairie Schools

**Mr. Bruce Borchers**  
Associate Superintendent  
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

**Mr. Matthew Bullard**  
Superintendent  
Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa  
Schools

**Ms. Bonnie Carlson**  
Director of Special  
Education  
Innovative Special  
Education Services

**Dr. Randall Clegg**  
Superintendent  
Burnsville-Eagan-Savage  
Schools

**Mr. Michael Conner**  
Superintendent  
Isle Schools

**Mr. Nathan Davis**  
Executive Director  
Perpich Center for Arts  
Education

**Ms. Joyce Eissinger**  
Curriculum Manager  
Carver-Scott Educational  
Cooperative

**Mr. Chris Fenske**  
Superintendent  
Lakeview Schools

**Mr. Paul Grams**  
Superintendent  
McGregor Schools

**Ms. Kathryn Griebel**  
Director of Education Services  
East Metro Integration  
District 6067

**Mr. Kevin Grover**  
Deputy Superintendent  
International Falls Schools

**Mrs. Deb Hilde**  
Superintendent  
Eveleth-Gilbert School

**Mr. Robert Johnson**  
Speech Language Pathologist  
Little Falls Schools

**Mr. Ryan Johnson**  
Student

**Dr. Michelle Langenfeld**  
Assistant Superintendent  
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

**Mr. Scott Loeslie**  
Superintendent  
Barnesville Schools

**Mr. Tim Lutz**  
Superintendent  
Kelliher Schools

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Assistant Director of  
Administrative Services  
Edina Schools

**Ms. Edna McKenzie**  
Special Education Teacher  
West Metro Ed Program

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Eagan Schools

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**Mr. Glenn Morris**  
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**Mrs. Danielle Theis**  
Director of Special Services  
Austin Schools

**Ms. Mary Jo Vene**  
Student  
Stillwater Area Schools

**Ms. Denise Waalen**  
Assistant Superintendent  
Mahtomedi Schools

**Mrs. Gayle Walkowiak**  
Asst. Superintendent-  
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Robbinsdale Area Schools

**Mr. Patrick Westby**  
Superintendent  
West Central Area Schools

**Mr. Tim Wilson**  
Chief Technology Officer  
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# POLARIS AWARD

## Roger Giroux is 2008 MASA Polaris Leadership Award Recipient

**T**he Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA), with the support of Ehlers and Associates, Inc., is pleased to announce that Dr. Roger Giroux, Superintendent for Anoka-Hennepin Schools, is the recipient of the 2008 Polaris Leadership Award.

The Polaris Leadership Award is presented each fall to recognize the exemplary school leadership of a MASA member who has twenty or more years of administrative experience. The selection is made by a committee of past MASA presidents.

The award is named for Polaris, the “North Star,” which is constant and unmoving. A navigator’s benchmark, Polaris marks true north, the fundamental direction that defines east, west, and south.

MASA Polaris Leadership Award nominees are evaluated on the following qualities:

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

Dr. Giroux has been superintendent for the Anoka-Hennepin Schools since 1995, but has served the district in various positions since 1976. Anoka-Hennepin has 41,000 students and a resident population of 240,000, and encompasses part or all of 13 communities that, through the 1990s, experienced tremendous growth in both population and ethnic and racial diversity.

During his more than 30 years in Anoka-Hennepin,

Dr. Giroux has helped shape the transformation of a rural school district into the largest district in Minnesota – and one of the most innovative. As superintendent, he has been responsible for building a new high school, a middle school, two elementary schools, an alternative middle school program, and a unique high school vocational program called STEP.

In recent years, Dr. Giroux has shaped the creation of new all-day kindergarten programs and specialty schools that respond to the ever-growing demand for educational choice. Anoka-Hennepin is



Continued on page 20



Congratulations Roger.

Ehlers is honored to sponsor this award. Thank you for your many years of unwavering leadership.

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# ANNOUNCING

The 2009 MASA & MASE Spring Conference will be held on  
Thursday, March 19 and Friday, March 20 at the Northland Inn, Minneapolis!

Mark your calendars today!

Visit <http://www.northlandinn.com/> to find out more information on this great new venue for our annual spring conference!

## POLARIS AWARD

Polaris Award  
Continued from page 19

one of seven member districts of the Northwest Suburban Integration School District, and is helping to sponsor a number of magnet schools with open enrollment for participating school districts.

Dr. Giroux's public service extends beyond his district to his professional community, and to state and federal governments. He has served as president and as a member of the board of directors of the Association of School Business Officials International, and the Minnesota Association of School Business Officials. He is an active member of the Educational Finance Association, American Education Research Association and the American Association of School Administrators. He has served on numerous state and federal committees focused on the assessment of learning, the evaluation of educational programs and the management of school finance.

Most recently, he was part of a delegation to China with the Minnesota Department of Education. He was also part of a group of current and former superintendents who crafted "Minnesota's Promise: World Class Schools, World Class State," which is a call to transform education in Minnesota for the global information age.

"I am very proud of our schools and this great school district. I am very proud of our teachers and staff, and of our students and the parents who support their success," says Dr. Giroux. "During these past years, Anoka-Hennepin has faced the most challenging academic, financial, facility, legal and demographic changes. The district answered those challenges by managing finances with excellence and integrity, seeking and obtaining public support for both operating and bonding revenue, and creating programs and courses that insist on rigor and offer choice."

Dr. Giroux holds doctoral and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College in Winona. Dr. Giroux began his career in the Milwaukee Public Schools. In 1971 he joined the Duluth Public Schools as Director of Planning and Evaluation, and in 1976 joined the Anoka-Hennepin Schools.

## STAFF PROFILE

**Jeanna Quinn**

**Job Title:**

Currently, my job title is Associate, Office & Data Management.

**How long have you been with MASA:**

I am in my ninth year at MASA.

**Tell us about your loved ones (spouse, significant other, children):**

I have two grown sons (Ryan, 27, and Nathan, 25). I also have a partner, Bill, a three-year-old granddaughter, Madalyn, and a beagle named Mulligan.

**What do you most like most about working for MASA:**

The thing I most like about working at MASA is the variety of work! We have to be flexible depending on what is happening at the time. Also, I have formed very close friendships with coworkers in the office. Most everyone has been here a very long time. Here in the MASA office, we have the system of running things down to a science, which helps in the planning process for workshops and conferences.

**One thing you would like the members of MASA to know about you:**

Beginning in 2009, I will be shifting jobs to take on some other duties. I will mentor Deb Larson (our new full-time employee) in data management as I shift to managing the MASA Jobsite Online, increasing my role in professional development for events, and supporting MASA business initiatives. I will continue to provide primary support to SEE and MASA Website Publishing (with the support of Jamie Hultgren).





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# NOMINATIONS

## Serving on the MASA Board of Directors

By Charlie Kyte

**T**he Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) is governed by a board of directors which is elected from the membership on a representative basis. Terms for board members are three years, and the Board meets four times a year. The Board also comes together in mid-June to plan strategically for the direction of MASA over the following year.

Board members are elected from all of the component groups, and we are very pleased to announce that a new component group has formed, which is made up of the curriculum leaders from the state of Minnesota. A component group must have at least 25 members in order to have representation on the Board of Directors.

There is a representative on the MASA Board from each Greater Minnesota region; typically, this person is a

superintendent. In addition, there are two superintendents representing the metropolitan area, and there is also a seat reserved for one administrator from Minneapolis and one from St. Paul.

MASA has four additional component groups, which include Special Education Directors, Central Office Administrators, Service Providers, and the newly-formed Curriculum Leaders. The Special Ed Directors, Central Office Administrators and Curriculum Leaders each have two seats on the Board of Directors—one being elected from the metropolitan area, and the second elected from greater Minnesota. The service provider group, made up of Service Cooperative directors and college professors, has one seat on the Board of Directors.

If you are interested in serving on MASA's Board of Directors we encourage you to enter your name for nomination when an appropriate vacancy occurs. The position requires your best thinking, but not too much of your time. It is an excellent way to add value to your professional association.

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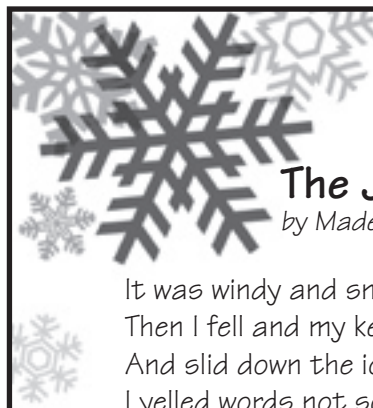
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### 2009 Officer Nominations Coming Soon!



MASA annual elections are just around the corner.

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



### The Joys Of Winter by Madeleine Begun Kane

It was windy and snowy. I stumbled.  
Then I fell and my keys and phone tumbled  
And slid down the ice.  
I yelled words not so nice.  
"How rude!" an old passerby grumbled.



# Project Lead The Way Advances STEM Education

By Mike Carr, Kern Family Foundation

**M**innesota's increasing emphasis on STEM education is receiving a powerful boost from Project Lead The Way (PLTW), the outstanding pre-engineering curriculum that is being implemented by a growing number of schools across the state. As more parents, educators and administrators learn about the rigor and excellence of the program, there is a growing interest in using it in their schools.

In a world driven by technological change, students without strong STEM backgrounds face limited futures. Recognizing the importance of math and science, PLTW courses build on these subjects through an emphasis on applied learning and hands-on projects. This approach connects with students of all interest and ability levels, and enables them to see how engineering and technology apply difficult concepts in real-world ways. PLTW adds value to curriculums that are meant to prepare students to be productive and engaged citizens, whether or not they choose to become engineers or work in technical fields.

Conceived in the early 1990s, PLTW's intent is to reverse the decline in the number of American students choosing engineering as a career. This decline is rightly seen as a very disturbing trend that will threaten America's quality of life in coming decades. It is estimated that 90% of all current engineering students are being trained in Asia, vividly illustrating the magnitude of the challenge facing American education.

Fortunately, PLTW is proving to be a very effective solution that is being enthusiastically embraced by students, teachers, administrators, counselors, school boards and parents. Engineering-related businesses, community colleges and universities also recognize its value, and are playing a key role in the program's success.

"PLTW offers engineering-type businesses a tremendous opportunity to become involved with local schools," says Thor Misko of Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE). Misko, who is the Affiliate Director of PLTW in Wisconsin, notes that when such businesses see the excellence of the program and the dedication of the students and teachers, they become very supportive and are eager to be a part of it.

Local businesses participate in the program in a variety



of ways, such as providing speakers in the classroom, hosting visits by students, mentoring project teams and making donations. "Making

connections to industry is always a priority," says a Fridley School District administrator, "but PLTW gives us the format in which to do it."

"Because of PLTW, the number of students interested in STEM fields has increased," Misko says. "Some of them go on to attend MSOE, and the university has seen a dramatic increase in the talent, comprehension and fortitude of these students. In fact, they have been outperforming non-PLTW students, earning GPAs that average almost two-tenths higher than non-PLTW students."

This phenomenon has also been noticed in Minneapolis, where one Minneapolis Public Schools administrator observed: "Disadvantaged PLTW students have shown academic performance levels greatly exceeding district averages for their populations, including elevated college readiness indicators."

PLTW provides schools with a comprehensive curriculum, developed jointly by K-12 educators, college faculty and engineers. Gateway To Technology, the middle school program, features five independent, nine-week units. Pathway To Engineering, the high school curriculum,

includes eight year-long classes, four of which are considered the minimum “core.” PLTW also offers a four-course program in Biomedical Sciences that includes a capstone class devoted to science research.

PLTW programs can be adopted incrementally over several years, and have been successful in schools of all sizes. Small rural high schools sometimes work together in consortia, or offer the program in conjunction with a local community college and/or other local high schools. Committed teachers and administrators are vital to the success of PLTW and its sustainability in a district. Once parents learn about the curriculum and how rigorous it is, they often become avid supporters.

Teacher training is an important element of PLTW. Before introducing PLTW courses in their classrooms, teachers attend two-week summer sessions devoted to each course at the state’s affiliate institution, at the University of Minnesota, or at Bemidji, Mankato or Saint Cloud State Universities. This intensive training introduces teachers to the concepts, lessons and activities that they will be bringing to their students, and provides an opportunity to network with other professionals.

Taught by university faculty and PLTW Master Teachers, these classes are highly popular. The specialized

training not only helps teachers implement the courses, but also infuses them with new enthusiasm. As a Grand Rapids teacher observed: “The extensive training, and the popularity of the program with our students, has also rejuvenated teachers and made them want to become part of the program.”

PLTW has been reviewed and adopted by the school boards, administration and teaching staffs of more than 3,000 schools around the country, and is continuing to expand in Minnesota. Last year, 34 middle schools and 56 high schools were part of Minnesota’s PLTW network, with 175 trained teachers and more than 17,000 students enrolled in PLTW courses. For more information, visit the National PLTW web site at <http://pltw.org>.

The Kern Family Foundation helps Minnesota schools implement Project Lead The Way through a competitive grant process that makes multi-year funding available for teacher training and other startup expenses – up to \$25,000 over two years for middle schools, and up to \$35,000 over three years for high schools. For more information on these grants, contact Mark Schroll at (262) 968-6838, ext. 16 or [mschroll@kffdn.org](mailto:mschroll@kffdn.org).

## Project Lead The Way Curriculum

Project Lead The Way’s curriculum has been developed jointly by high school and college educators in conjunction with working engineers, with a hands-on emphasis that reflects real world kinds of engineering activities. PLTW students who go on to study engineering or other technical disciplines are well grounded in the principles needed to be successful at the post-secondary level.

### **Middle School Gateway To Technology (9-week units)**

- Design & Modeling
- The Magic of Electrons
- The Science of Technology
- Automation & Robotics
- Flight & Space

### **High School Pathway To Engineering Foundation Courses**

- Introduction of Engineering Design
- Principles of Engineering
- Digital Electronics

### **Specialization Courses**

- Computer Integrated Manufacturing
- Civil Engineering & Architecture

- Biotechnical Engineering
- Aerospace Engineering

### **Capstone Course in Engineering Design & Development**

Project Lead The Way also offers a separate high school curriculum in Biomedical Sciences consisting of four classes:

- Principles of the Biomedical Sciences
- Human Body Systems
- Medical Intervention
- Capstone Course

# 2nd Annual Minnesota School Safety Conference

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**February 11-13, 2009**

**HOLIDAY INN HOTEL & SUITES, ST. CLOUD**

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## School Finance Elections: A Comprehensive Planning Model for Success



*"The role of school system leader has broadened and gotten more complex over the last few decades. There was once a time when leaders could be effective by being 'B' keepers - overseeing buildings, buses, books, budgets, and bonds. Now, the task has broadened so leaders must also be master of the 'Cs' of education - communication, collaboration, community building, and child advocacy. In (this workshop), Don Lifto and Brad Senden have found a way to wed these two obligations."*  
(Paul Houston, past Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators)

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

**Presenters** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. Don Lifto**  
Senior Vice President, Springsted, Inc.  
**Dr. Brad Senden**  
The Center for Community Opinion and Political Designs

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

**Who Will Benefit?** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Cost** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Nonmembers NOT attending with an MASA Member: \$149

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

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

Cancellations made before or on January 16 will be charged a \$20 cancellation fee. No refunds for cancellations made after January 16, 2009. No-shows will be billed.

Registration Form - Choice of Two Dates / Locations  
**IMPORTANT - Please Check the Session You Wish to Attend:**  
(Please register for either location by Friday, January 16.)

**(check)** **St. Cloud (Resource Training & Solutions)**  
**Date • Time:** Thursday, January 29, 2009 • 9:45 am - 4 pm  
Registration begins at 9:15 am.  
**Location:** Resource Training & Solutions  
4150 2nd Street South, Suite 550  
St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301  
320-255-3236  
**Directions:** <http://www.resourcetraining.com/RT5maps.aspx>

OR ...

**(check)** **Saint Paul (The Venue at Galtier Plaza)**  
**Date • Time:** Friday, January 30, 2009 • 9:45 am - 4 pm  
Registration begins at 9:15 am.  
**Location:** The Venue at Galtier Plaza (Downtown)  
380 Jackson Street • Third Floor  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101  
**Directions:** <http://www.springsted.com>  
Click on "Contact Us," then "Office Locations"

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City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Office Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Please check appropriate registration categories:

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 Parent  
 Staff Member

Register via:

Mail: MASA, 1884 Como Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55108  
Fax: 651-645-7518

Pay your registration fee via:

**Check:** Mail your check (payable to MASA) to the above address. Please include a copy of your registration form so we know what the payment is for!

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## January

**1-2**  
Winter Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

**8**  
MASA Foundation  
Board Meeting  
MASA Offices,  
St. Paul

**14**  
Great Start  
Workshop IV  
Hilton Hotel,  
Minneapolis

**14**  
Community  
Conversations  
Hilton Hotel,  
Minneapolis

**15**  
2nd Year Cohort  
Minneapolis  
Convention Center,  
Minneapolis

**15-16**  
MSBA Winter  
Convention  
Minneapolis  
Convention Center,  
Minneapolis

**20**

Applying the Arts in  
an Inartistic World  
Guthrie Theatre,  
Minneapolis

**29**  
School Finance  
Election Workshop,  
Resource Training &  
Solutions  
St. Cloud

**30**  
School Finance  
Election Workshop,  
Galtier Plaza,  
St. Paul

## February

**11-13**  
Safety Summit  
Holiday Inn, St. Cloud

**13**  
Newsletter  
Submissions Due

**19-22**  
AASA  
National Convention  
San Francisco, CA

## March

**18**  
Great Start  
Workshop V  
Northland Inn,  
Minneapolis

**18**  
MASA Executive  
Committee Meeting  
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.  
MASA Board of  
Directors Meeting  
1 - 4:30 p.m.  
Northland Inn,  
Minneapolis

**18**  
2nd Year Cohort  
Northland Inn,  
Minneapolis

**19-20**  
MASA & MASE  
Spring Conference  
Northland Inn,  
Minneapolis

**26**  
Emerging Leaders  
Conference  
TIES, Roseville

## April

**10**  
Spring Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

**22-24**  
AASA Legislative  
Advocacy Conference

Crystal City Hyatt  
Regency Hotel,  
Washington, DC

## May

**15**  
Newsletter  
Submissions Due

**25**  
Spring Holiday  
MASA Offices Closed

## June

**11-12**  
MASA Board Retreat  
Como Zoo &  
Conservatory

MSBA-MASA

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