

Identifying Your Cotton Candy Career Moments

**Kathy Leedom
Superintendent,
Willmar Schools and
MASA President**

Our family owned and operated a grocery store in Appleton, Minnesota for many years as I was growing up. We provided home delivery of groceries three days a week and opened the store after hours and on an occasional Sunday in the summer so that migrant field workers could buy their groceries. My entire family was involved in the store, and I loved everything about it from stocking shelves, putting up orders to be delivered, bagging potatoes, and using a hot iron to seal the wrappers that we placed around heads of lettuce. When the lutefisk arrived in late fall in a pail of lye, we knew that the holidays were just around the corner.

One of my favorite memories had to do with the annual store anniversary event at which time we had an extra festive atmosphere going for a whole week. One of those June anniversaries found me in charge of a special cotton candy machine that was rented for the occasion. My mother wanted me looking perky so arranged for me to have one of those twice-yearly, obligatory permanents put in my hair at the beauty parlor. I was the first appointment on Monday morning and then hustled over to the store to begin my key duties with the cotton candy. The machine was prominently placed in one of the front window areas, and I was feeling very important as I whisked the cones around the sugar-coated,

motorized tub to create these fluffy treats for all who wanted them. I was eleven, loved sugar, and anxious to give these candy clouds on a stick to each and every customer.

As a fairly small girl, I was bent over that machine and accumulating quite a bit of sugar and pink fluff on my new hairdo. The cosmetology protocols in those years required that the freshly permed hair could not be washed for about a week so that the curls and waves would take hold. I went to bed every night that week with a head full of pink sugar that was sticky to the touch. It was not a problem to me, but I remember my mom being in kind of a dither. I love to recall the details of that great anniversary event, and it may be why today I still like to use a lot of hair spray in order to get that cotton candy hold on my hair!

We all have these favorite recollections that are a part of the memory bank that serves us well throughout our lifetimes. Time blurs a few of the details; however, in those really important occurrences we can still hang on to even the most intricate senses that surround the event. Hopefully, we are all creating *career* memories that will be an important part of our futures. With all of the time that we spend in our chosen positions, it is so important to identify those occasions that we want to feed our professional identities forever. I challenge you to think about the people and events that have and continue to make your professional life valuable and treasured to you. Take mental

pictures, record the sounds in your memory, file the nuances in those file folders of the brain so that as life progresses you will precisely recall the positive difference you have made in the world.



Kathy Leedom

I trust that you are so proud to be an educator in a helping profession that is designed with service to others as the framework. What a gift it is to be spending our life's work for the sole purpose of making life better for the students we serve. Think for a moment about the important work we do to sustain a democracy through our public education system. Furthermore, ponder the opportunities we are a part of providing for equipping young people to be a part of a global economy on which the future depends. We face so many
Cotton Candy continued on page 21

inside ...

Spring Conference Highlights.....	2
A Fresh Start.....	3
The Prepared Mind.....	6
Managing to Lead	7
Investing in Protection.....	9
What Schools Need to Know	10
President-Elect Candidates	14
Thank You.....	16

MASA & MASE present . . .



2007 Spring Conference March 15-16

Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis South

School district leadership team perspective is diverse, coming together in collaboration to impact success in the school community, student achievement, and innovative practices. Join your colleagues at the MASA/MASE Spring Conference and explore shared leadership and its role in shaping change. Learn about the latest brain research supporting effective instructional techniques. Explore scientifically designed, research-based approaches to affecting student progress. Participate in the dialogue about Response to Intervention/Instruction. Learn how the leadership community can drive and support a change in perspective and practice. All this and more is waiting for you at Spring Conference!

Conference Highlights . . .

We will begin the conference by exploring the "why" behind the need for innovative change in instructional technique. For the past 25 years, keynote speaker **Dr. Jack Fletcher**, a board certified clinical neuropsychologist and Distinguished University Professor at the University of Houston, has completed research on children with developmental disabilities, with a focus on the development of reading, language, and other cognitive skills. Join him and explore the latest brain research supporting scientifically designed, research-based approaches to affecting student progress, and hear his views on Response to Intervention/Instruction.

The **Exhibit Fair** is a convenient way to visit with representatives of companies offering the latest products and services. Sign up for the prize drawings!

Don't forget to shop the **Silent Auction**. Profits support the programs of the MASA Foundation. There will be many bid-inspiring items up for auction, so be sure to check them all out. And it's not too late to make your own donation to the auction—simply indicate your contribution on your registration form.

Throughout the conference, we will celebrate the ac-

complishments of your colleagues with **Awards**.

On Thursday afternoon, **Dr. Robert Pasternack** will investigate how our leadership community can drive and support a change in perspective. In his session, he will examine our current practices, consider research-based options for reducing the over-identification of special education students, and discuss how education leaders can impact significant cultural change.

Relax after a day of learning at Thursday afternoon's **Leaders' Reception**. Meet your MASA and MASE officer candidates, enjoy refreshments, and visit with your colleagues.

Get your teams together for the first annual **MASA Foundation Spelling Bee** on Thursday after the Leaders' Reception. Erudite MASA and MASE members will compete for bragging rights, fun, and prizes! See the insert in your registration materials for details.

Throughout the conference, we will celebrate the accomplishments of your colleagues with **Awards**.

Twenty-four different **small group breakout sessions** will narrow the thematic focus to examine cutting edge topics. Session details will be available on the MASA and MASE web sites on February 21.

Thursday's **Women Leaders' Reception** offers a casual social time for networking, conversation, and refreshments. Plan to stop for a drink and a chat on Thursday after the Spelling Bee.

Who are your "go-to people?" How did you figure out who they were? Do you want more? Executive coach and PR expert **Jim Lukaszewski** knows how to get them and use them and he will be here on Friday to tell us. Join this session and investigate the how and why of developing quality advisors. We will explore how to identify trusted, strategic counselors among your staff, colleagues, and community, what to expect from them, and how to assess their advice.

Think school leadership can be an uphill climb some days? You won't want to miss our Friday luncheon speaker **Alison Levine**, leader of the first American Women's Everest Expedition. Ms. Levine was born with a life-threatening heart condition that precluded most demanding physical activities. As a teenager, her health was so unstable that she was not even allowed to do such basic things as drive a car or walk up stairs. But 13 years after her initial diagnosis she had surgery that changed her life and climbing stairs soon gave way to climbing mountains. In her presentation, she will demonstrate how the skills that kept her and her team alive in the wilderness are equally important for excellent leaders affecting change.

LEADER'S notes

Spring Cleaning

by Charlie Kyte,
Executive Director, MASA

We have so many new and good things happening at MASA that we are going to roll a number of them together into this “spring cleaning” article. At MASA we continue to work with our members in placements for new jobs, plans for retirement and plans for people to move on to other positions. Professional development and conferences are part of our stock and trade. Here are some of the other things that are going on at MASA.

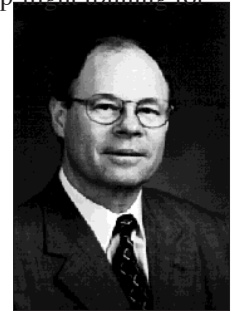
- Kay Worner, a retired MASA member (she was the superintendent of schools in Sartell), is now an associate professor at St. Cloud State. Kay has agreed to author a book for MASA, which will contain many tips for school leaders based on experiences of many of you. Kay is working with a small group of retired MASA members and will be soliciting ideas from across the whole

MASA membership. She will then weave these ideas and stories together into a manuscript, which we will be presenting to AASA for possible publication. We are looking forward to the book being published this coming fall and being made available to our members at that time.

- Over the past several years the MASA staff has taken on more and more conferences and has gained a reputation as one of the top groups in planning conferences for nonprofit associations in the state. Each year the small MASA staff (only five people besides the Executive Director) plans and executes four major conferences. In addition, they host a number of workshops in conjunction with the MSBA conferences and also our own series of “Fresh Start,” “Great Start,” and “Second Year Cohort” workshops. The MASA staff supports the Minnesota

Rural Leaders program, which is an effort to provide top-flight training for rural school leaders.

- MASA building and office upgrades: MASA has owned the MASA Office Building at 1884 Como Avenue for eighteen years. During that time, we have made continuous upgrades to the building. In the near future, we will install new carpet on the main floor of the building. This summer we will be fixing a troublesome and persistent leak into the basement level of the building. Just a few years ago we completely upgraded the conference room in the lower level and soon afterwards



Charlie Kyte

Spring Cleaning continued on page 20

A Fresh Start – A Program for Mid-Career MASA Members

by Charlie Kyte,
Executive Director, MASA

MASA has just launched a program of renewal for mid-career MASA members. The program is named “**Fresh Start**” and it is being sponsored through a significant grant from the ATS&R Architectural group.

Three years ago we began the “**Great Start**” workshops for new MASA members and new superintendents. That program has been well received and it has been effective in helping our new members learn the nuances of their jobs in the first year of service as school district CEO’s and top administrative leaders. We also began a second year cohort so MASA members could have an additional enhancement during their second

year of service.

While we were building the program of the “**Great Start**” workshops, many of our seasoned members looked at the agendas and indicated that a number of the topics would also serve as a renewal program for mid-career members. Thus, we began the development of the “**Fresh Start**” program. We are pleased to let our members know that we will be able to offer four “**Fresh Start**” sessions each year without charge to our members. See the dates for the “**Fresh Start**” program on page 20. We encourage mid-career members to sign up for all four of the programs. Or, pick and choose the ones you would like to attend.

“**Fresh Start**” is designed to refresh the skills of our members

and provide a facilitated time when members can discuss issues and new directions for our schools. Senior MASA members or recent retirees will facilitate many of the “**Fresh Start**” sessions.

The ATS&R Architectural Firm has agreed to sponsor the “**Fresh Start**” workshops with a substantial sponsorship grant to MASA. It is through their effort that we are able to provide these programs at no cost to our members. We appreciate ATS&R and our many strong sponsors that help us with the programs we provide for our membership. ATS&R knows that school superintendents and other MASA members need time for professional development and reflection, with the “**Fresh Start**” program they would be better able to lead our schools as we continue our quest to provide a globally competitive education system for the children of Minnesota. •

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We asked our members ...

You Must Remember This - If I could give a new administrator one piece of advice, it would be ...

Answer by Tim Caroline

Superintendent, Moose Lake Schools

If I could give a new administrator one piece of advice, it would be to make sure to take time for yourself. It is easy to become overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the job and neglect other important areas of your life, like family. While long hours and nightly meetings are a necessary part of the job, it needs to be balanced. If you walk into your home and your family asks, "Who are you?" you may need to evaluate your situation. Do your job and do it well, but remember the importance of family and friends. During stressful times, you will need them.

Answer by Boyd Bradbury

Superintendent, Waubun-Ogema-White Earth Schools

As a new administrator, always strive to do what is best for kids. In the face of opposition, this position will allow you the moral high ground when you are asked to provide rationale for beliefs, comments, and actions. While there are many competing interests that must be addressed as an administrator, none is more important than keeping in mind the best course of action to provide maximum opportunities for students.

While the glory of your first administrative appointment will fade quickly, your commitment to children should persist. Be prepared for criticism, thicken your skin, and remain resolute in your loyalty to our greatest asset; that is, our children. •

Minnesota Rural Education Leadership Program

MASA and the Minnesota Rural Education Association, with support from the Blandin Foundation, have teamed up to offer the Minnesota Rural Education Leadership Program, beginning June 2007.

The program will provide rural Minnesota school districts with an opportunity to develop skills to drive important changes in their school districts. Participants can expect to learn leadership, analytic, and communication skills to develop district vision, identify measurable student outcomes, develop high impact site teams and improve relationships between their school and community.

The program will be limited to twelve rural school districts and offered in three two-day conference settings beginning in June 2007 and ending in February 2008. Districts will be selected through an application process and must be willing to pay for travel and lodging expenses for their district participants.

To learn more about this program, you are invited to attend an informational session during the MASA conference. Please join us at 10:30 a.m. on March 15, 2007 at the Bloomington Sheraton Hotel in Verandas 7-8 to meet the faculty, hear an overview of the program, and pick up additional information.

In the meanwhile, if you have any questions, please call Superintendent Janet Mohr, Program Director at 952-898-3746 or email janetmohr@comcast.net. •

LEADER'S toolbox

The Prepared Mind and the Grant Writer

by **Randi Lundell**
Hamline University

I am not a skilled matchmaker, especially when it comes to other people. I once "fixed up" a male friend of mine with a woman I thought he might enjoy spending time with. David was pretty easy going and laid back so I thought that whatever happened he would at least be polite. When I asked him to report on the date later in the week his only comment was, "Do you know she doesn't use liners in her wastebaskets? Who doesn't use a liner? It really turned me off."

Silly me, if only I had remembered Louis Pasteur's celebrated quote: "chance favors the prepared mind." So does romance. And so does grant seeking.

Although my romantic match-making days are over, I'm still in the business of match-making when it comes to seeking grant funds. Grant seeking, writing, and management involves a great deal of advance preparation in order to avoid what I now call the "wastebasket liner reaction." Here are a few tips:

- 1. Carefully follow the guidelines for writing the proposal.** I can't emphasize this enough. Each grant request for applications (RFA) has specific guidelines for a reason: to give the funding agency a clear picture of your project to see if it is a match for their funding priorities. Sometimes the criteria are vague, but there should be someone you can contact to get a better idea of what they fund. Websites are helpful and many agencies require an initial letter or inquiry or a pre-

proposal to help narrow the field. Remember that the agency likely has to answer to a board or executive committee for its activities and your project must fall within those guidelines in order to be funded.

- 2. Know your goals and objectives.** Have a good rationale for why you need the funds that you are seeking and try to be as clear as possible about what you want to achieve if you get the funds. Your grant proposal will serve as an outline of your activities and outcomes. It is also a legal contract with the funding agency. Whatever you say you are going to do you must be prepared to carry through on and document in a report when the grant period ends.
- 3. Be prepared for change.** Every awarded grant is a reason for celebration, but it also invariably means change for somebody! Be prepared to have to make changes in your current infrastructure. Make clear to everyone involved in the grant proposal that they will be working with a new model or paradigm and that part of the "adventure" of a grant is to try new things.
- 4. Communicate often with your funding agency.** One of the best ways to guarantee success with your project is to keep the funding agency informed about changes as the grant activities take shape. Despite best efforts at planning, there will be glitches or unforeseen things that can change the complex-

ion of your grant. Make sure you get permission from the agency before you make any changes in your grant activities and get it in writing.

- 5. Give yourself a running start at sustainability.**

Once your grant period is over, you may find yourself back to where you started! Some projects are "seeded" to give your school district an idea of how great it would be if this project were in place permanently. However, the reality is that often the activities that you are passionate about must have evidence that they work to improve student learning. As you go through the process of writing—and eventually implementing—a successful grant proposal, be thinking ahead about ways to get the program or activity on the administrative and community radar screen so that it doesn't go away when the funding stops.

As in life, so in grants: the prepared mind gets the prize! Good luck and happy hunting. If you need more information about resources for grant opportunities you can contact me at rmlunde@umn.edu or contact the Center for Global Environmental Education (CGEE) at Hamline University for their next online course in grant writing for educators. •

Managing to Lead

by Wayne Kazmierczek
Superintendent,
Lakeview Schools

School Administrators as Instructional Leaders: School administrators oversee facilities, serve in diverse communities and a number of others tasks, but in the end they still need to improve the teaching and learning within their district.

Educational leadership. The most important thing we do as school administrators is lead. The reality for many of us, however, is that a disproportionate amount of our time is spent managing. We all strive to improve teaching and learning in our districts, but finding an appropriate balance between managing and leading can be a challenge. Consider just for a moment what it would be like to focus the majority of our time on matters of educational leadership. Certainly this would help to move our districts along the often poorly marked path of school improvement.

In the last few weeks you have

likely discussed to some extent balanced literacy, a balanced approach to math instruction, and possibly balanced leadership. And let us not forget about the importance of balance when we consider our personal and professional lives. Now consider balance as it relates to time spent as a manager and time spent as a leader. As school administrators, we are asked to do many things. At the very top of this list should be our responsibility to improve teaching and learning. We know that district leadership has a significant impact on student achievement; we impact what really matters in schools.

If your district is like many throughout the state, you have seen a decrease in the number of administrators in recent years. Often school administrators are targeted as some of the first to go because some view these types of reductions as a way to keep the impact as far away from the classroom as possible. None of us should promote top-heavy organizations, but

cutting these positions has obviously resulted in fewer managers and, more importantly, fewer leaders at a time when we know that successful, sustainable school improvement efforts rely significantly on high quality, visionary, and courageous leaders.

We do not always have the luxury of relying on a clearly marked path. Each educational system brings unique variables to any situation. The most critical piece of school improvement is simply to begin the journey. As improvement efforts move forward in our districts, accept that there will be challenges. There are times when the best we can hope for may be one or two guiding principles upon which to place our faith. Accept that sometimes the best we can do is have a clear goal that will bring us clarity when we are challenged. If we wait for a perfect map, we may never get started.

Do not ever wonder if you make a difference. You do. Yes, sometimes we must manage, but remember that we are not only managers. Remember that our students are counting on us to lead. •

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CHAMPIONS FOR children

Future Focus



Shari Prest

by Shari Prest,
Ark Associates

As we look into the future, it is clear that our schools will not be the same tomorrow as they are today, nor are they the same today as they were yesterday.

The world is changing at a faster pace than ever before, and the importance of public education and the expectations placed upon our schools are leading the race. Rapid change accelerates opportunities for cohesion and the risk of fracture. It is incumbent upon education leaders as Champions for Children™ to lead the way into a sustainable and cohesive future. Several organizations have been engaged in the journey of authentically identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and barriers to increased success in our schools. Some of their discoveries follow:

P.S. Minnesota, 2006 – "While Minnesota continues to be a national leader in most educational quality indicators, worrisome trends indicate our historic leadership is in jeopardy."

- In 1995, Minnesota ranked 12th in the nation for per pupil spending; in 2003, Minnesota ranked 28th – below the national average for the first time ever.
- In May, 2006, *Education Week* magazine graded Minnesota a "D" with respect to the availability of technology for our students and teachers.
- Fees paid by students and families (for coursework and extracurricular activities) in Minnesota increased 45 percent from 2002 to 2005, according to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Quality Counts 2007, From Cradle to Career

- Minnesota ranks 3rd in the country when considering the "chance for success" of our children.
- Minnesota ranks 4th among the states on the academic achievement index.
- Minnesota ranks 14th in the country for the percent of our 3- and 4-year olds enrolled in preschool.
- Minnesota ranks 29th in the country for the percent of children whose parents are fluent in English.
- Minnesota ranks 27th in the country for the percent of eligible children enrolled in kindergarten.

Parents United for Public Schools

- Minnesota ranked 3rd in the nation for the percentage of current expenditures spent on instruction and instruction-related expenses in fiscal year 2004 at 69.7%. The national average was 66%.
- As a percent of personal income, Minnesota ranked:
- 8th in state revenue (48th in local; 46th in federal)
- 30th in total spending for instruction (25th for salaries; 30th for benefits)
- 28th in spending for general administration
- Minnesota ranks 27th in the country for the percent of eligible children enrolled in kindergarten.
- 51st in spending for school administration
- 11th in Public K-12 School Revenues from the state (4th in terms of percent of school revenues from the state; behind Vermont, Hawaii and New Mexico)
- 27th in Public K-12 School Revenues from local sources

- 25th in Public K-12 School Revenues from the federal government

Minnesota's Promise, World-Class Schools, World-Class State (A call to action from twenty-seven past and present superintendents to transform education in Minnesota for the global information age) –

"We must create a coherent system of public education in Minnesota—from the capitol to the classroom—that prepares every student for success in the global Information Age. The world-class system we envision can be characterized by eight traits:"

- There are many academic roads, but all are rigorous and all lead to higher education.
- Educational investment starts early.
- Learning takes as much time as it takes.
- Great educators have great support.
- Data and research inform teaching and improve learning every day.
- Funding is predictable and sufficient to produce world-class performance.
- Services for students with special needs emphasize outcomes, not processes.
- Global citizenship is a core academic subject. •

Sources: *Minnesota's Promise, 2006, Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2005 and Estimates of School Statistics 2006* National Education Association Research, FY 2004-05 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Quality Counts, 2007, Education Vital Signs 2006, Education Week magazine*, Minnesota Department of Education, Parents United for Public Schools (www.parentsunited.org), *P.S. Minnesota 2006*.

Investing in Protection: Factors to Reduce Youth Risk of Violence and Drug Use



Chris Sonenblum

by Chris
Sonenblum
Director
of Student
Services,
Roseville
Area
Schools

First the bad news: Chemical use and abuse among families today is not improved in comparison to the time when initiatives for promoting “Safe and Drug Free Schools” began a couple of decades ago. In fact, there is substantial research to suggest that drug use and abuse is more pervasive among our students and their parents than ever before. New drugs of abuse are emerging and they are becoming popular among students whose circumstances are as varied as are their appearances and activities. The chain of substance abuse, violence, fear and isolation is evident in our communities and suicide is still seen as a viable option by some of our youth each year. While patterns of hopelessness and risk factors are often associated with poverty, chemical use and antisocial behavior are not bound by class distinctions, ethnicity or socioeconomic circumstance. Consistent with the earlier revelation that chemical use is a “disease of denial,” abuse is even characterized by some as a harmless rite of passage; a fact of life.

Ready for the good news? The prevention, intervention, and protective factors found to be effective against the frightening conditions mentioned above are still powerful and consistent in spite of our fast-paced and ever-changing culture. Modest investments in cultivating these protective factors to nurture

families and reduce the likelihood that a multigenerational cycle of drug abuse and violence will be perpetuated pay huge dividends to our society. The belief by practitioners who work with youth in schools and communities that every dollar spent yields a three dollar savings has been born out in comparisons of the relatively low-cost prevention efforts and the huge tax dollar savings when a student is redirected along a path to crime and incarceration and becomes a working citizen and a productive member of the community—even a role model for others.

Dr. Michael Resnick of the University of Minnesota spoke to the Health Panel for the White House Conference on Adolescent Health in 2000. He identified “recurring, robust protective factors that apply across many social groups of young people” and made a compelling argument that their application is not limited by gender, ethnicity, geographic location or social class (Washington D.C., 2000). Resnick’s work provided the foundation for the Investing in Youth program spearheaded by the Suburban Ramsey County Family Services Collaborative (SRFC).

The effort resulted from analysis of the Minnesota Student Survey Data collected in 1999. In 2003, the Collaborative interviewed over 670 middle school and high school students and the earlier findings were confirmed.

The Protective Factors provide the cornerstone for initiatives to promote community health across four school districts in a collaborative model of prevention and intervention. In February, 2006, members of the collaborative reaffirmed the efficacy of the protective factors and strengthened their commit-

ment to them after hearing from a panel of youth in Roseville who listed understanding, honesty, respect, freedom with responsibility, places to congregate and be with friends, transportation, and adults who really listen as what helps them to be successful in school and life.

Connection to Family and to School:

Regardless of the particular structure of a student’s family, a feeling of connection acts as protection against the stresses and risks that foster an escape into drug use. In the same way, the sense that caring adults at school “know who you are and are glad that you’re here” counters feelings of isolation and fear that reinforce a desire to resort to asocial behavior.

As School Administrators, it is tempting to say, “We can’t control what happens at home. We only have a few hours to counter the impact of a student’s days and years in a dysfunctional family or a violent neighborhood.” Our approach to families and the assumptions we make in welcoming them to the community of our schools can nurture the relationships of parents and children, nonetheless. We can assume a positive commitment and acknowledge evidence of it. We can adapt to the reality of parents who work multiple jobs, sleep in the daytime, and don’t know the language we use to contact them, fear for personal safety or lack food for their families.

The encouraging point made by Resnick and the underlying premise of Investing in Youth is the fact that the protective factors of connection to family and school can actually offset the powerful risk factors identified as predictive of chemical use, violence and other antisocial behavior. In other words, promoting connection to caring adults at school is a deterrent to risk behavior typically derived from witnessing

Investing continued on page 20

LEGAL issues

What Schools Need to Know About the National Day of Silence



Susan E. Torgerson

by Susan Torgerson
Attorney, Kennedy & Graven,
Chartered

Q: What is the "National Day of Silence?"

A: The *National Day of Silence* is a nationwide student led action intended

to protest the bullying and harassment of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) individuals. It was begun in 1996 by college students and is now sponsored in K-12 schools by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network). This year it is planned for Wednesday, April 18, 2007.

Q: What will happen on that day?

A: The view of the sponsors is that the observance can be tailored by the particular student group. The general theme, however, is that the participants take a "vow of silence" as a way of advocating to "break the silence" on LGBT issues. They then will not speak during that day. They may hand out cards that explain why they are not speaking. They may decide to wear shirts with slogans about the purpose. There may also be events planned at day end to "break the silence."

Q: How might this affect our school?

A: Unless you prepare and communicate with students in advance, you may have issues arise because of students not speaking in class where their spoken participation is expected. In addition, there may be reactions by non participants to the message of the participants.

Q: How should the school handle the Day of Silence?

A: Each community is different, and each school district should address this question in advance. The district should decide how to handle the student and staff participants as well as staff, student and community reaction to the participants.

Q: Can't we simply prohibit participation in our school?

A: Student speech is an issue that has often been addressed by the courts. In this situation, initially it is the lack of speech that will be used to convey a message, but there will likely be a written explanation offered by participants. Still, the actions of participants may fall within the realm of protected speech, assuming that it is undertaken without disruption (appropriate time, place and manner) to the academic day of the school. Whether there is disruption in your school depends upon many factors, and those factors may vary from school to school. Thus, a case by case review is warranted, depending upon the plans for participation in your particular school, and the anticipated reactions.

Q: Are there differences between student and staff participation issues?

A: Yes, there could be differences. Staff have additional constraints in that they have employment duties to fulfill during the school day. Teaching staff cannot likely remain silent during the duty day, and their job duties are paramount. In addition, staff discussion with students on these issues is governed by district policy and curriculum, in

many respects.

Q: May we impose any controls on participation?

A: Yes, of course. Even protected activities are not allowed to be conducted at a time or place or in a manner which disrupts the educational processes in the school. Thus, for example, if the teacher is requiring oral presentations on that day, you need not allow students to opt out by participating in the Day of Silence.

Q: What are some prudent measures we could take in advance rather than wait for the Day of Silence to see what happens?

A: Here are a few advance steps to consider:

- If you have student interest groups which have approached your administration to discuss participating, use the opportunity to work through the potential issues and to see whether and what you will allow. Otherwise, consider approaching student groups which you think might have an interest in participating and ask if they have plans to participate (Student GLBT groups, Diversity groups, etc.)

- Check to see what board policies may come into play in the event that your students do participate. Evaluate how the policies may affect participation or the reaction to

Silence continued on page 21

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The Minnesota Legislature – We're About Half Way Through

by Charlie Kyte,
Executive Director, MASA

The middle of March marks the halfway point for this session of the Minnesota Legislature. It is an important session and the foremost challenge is the setting of the budget for the 2007-09 biennium. The legislature is also setting the groundwork for the longer term funding of public education.

The session began smoothly in January and on into February, as new legislators learned their roles and new committee chairs took their places at the heads of their committees. We heard the governor's state of the state address and his budget proposals for state government. Recently, we heard the budget forecast which came out at the end of February. The stage is now set for the hard negotiating that will need to happen to bring the legislative session to a conclusion.

We predicted early on that there would be a collision between the expectations of K-12 educators and others who receive funding from the state government, and the actual revenues that would be available to meet these needs. That collision is now imminent. Unless new revenues are raised,

there will not be enough money to fund the numerous demands being put upon state government.

In order to have public schools flourish, we need to have a strong increase in the general foundation aid funding for schools. We need to have the vast shortfalls in special education funding resolved. Investments need to be made in early education to have our children ready to be successful in school. If reforms of the K-12 system are desired, those reforms will also require funding. Will the Minnesota Senate, Minnesota House and Governor Pawlenty be able to unite to find a way of providing the funding for public education to thrive?

The last two months of the legislative session will mean difficult negotiations and some frayed tempers. We, as an association, intend to push as hard as possible for Minnesota's state government to provide an adequate funding system for public education. If that funding system can be put into place, we will also be strong proponents of continuing the process of reforming our public school systems in such a way that our children will be able to be successful in the global economy of the future. •

MASA Foundation Makes Grants Available to Members

by Charlie Kyte
Executive Director, MASA

MASA members and retirees support the MASA Foundation for the purpose of enhancing the professional development of active MASA members. The Foundation Board is made up of MASA retirees and active members.

Over the past number of years, the Foundation has worked hard to build an endowment, which has grown to nearly \$200,000. The Foundation is now in a position to make regular grants to members who want to improve their professional growth.

The MASA Foundation is requesting proposals for grants in the amounts of \$500 to \$1000. The Foundation has identified the following areas in which they encourage members to apply for grants. A use for granted funds could be to:

- form a small learning community of your peers, or
- arrange for personal coaching to grow a specific area of your leadership skills, or
- attend a specific training opportunity.

Several focus areas recommended by the Foundation Board include:

- Leadership Development:
 - ✓ Team Building
 - ✓ Board/superintendent relationship development

✓ Conflict resolution skills

- Communication skills:

- ✓ Developing internal and external communication plans
- ✓ Facilitating processes of group and strategic planning
- ✓ Enhancing writing skills

- Mutual support and study:

- ✓ Developing new initiatives
- ✓ Studying and resolving common problems
- ✓ Engaging in the study of leadership topics

The Foundation Board encourages grant applicants to consider building these grants with other available resources when possible. There is an expectation that successful grantees report back to the Foundation on how their experience impacted their work and professional life.

If you have an idea that falls into the categories identified above, please complete the application on the MASA web site. Requests will be accepted until May 1, 2007 at which point the Grants Committee will make decisions for the awarding of the grants. The Committee will award at least \$5000 in grants to be used this summer and fall. More information regarding the MASA Foundation program is available on the MASA website at www.mnasa.org. •



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Lisa Winterowd, System Administrator
Brainerd Public Schools, Minnesota

ELECTION news

President-Elect Candidates Speak Out

This year, MASA is once again fortunate to have a strong slate of candidates for the various leadership positions' elections. We are using a number of different methods to deliver candidate campaign information to you. Many thanks to everyone running for a leadership position. Your commitment to your Association, your colleagues, and Minnesota's kids, is exemplary and the very thing that keeps MASA vital and progressive in our mission to be the voice for education administrators in Minnesota. We offer special thanks to David Bottem, Dan Brooks and John Landgaard, candidates for MASA President-Elect. The position of MASA President is a challenging and time-consuming one, and we are very fortunate to have continued interest by such quality leaders. Below are David's, Dan's and John's comments:



David Bottem

David Bottem, Barnum Schools

One of MASA's four strategic goals for 2006-2007 (Exceptional Member Support) is to reach out to every MASA member to determine, and then to meet, his or her leadership needs. This

is a goal for which I am a strong advocate and would like to expand both MASA's and its members' role. It is essential to the vitality and strength of MASA that new members have the opportunity to receive the support and mentoring of more experienced colleagues. While mentoring is currently an informal arrangement in the nine regions of the state, the continued implementation of MASA's goal of Exceptional Member Support would create a more formal involvement of MASA to ensure that every new member would have an effective mentor. For those members who are mid-career and experienced, MASA would continue to expand its quality training.

I am proud of MASA's role as the positive voice and advocate between MASA's members and the public and its lawmakers. I support MASA's goals and appreciate the fact that it recognizes the achievements of its members and provides learning opportunities for each stage of an administrator's career. It is an honor for me to have been nominated as President-Elect of MASA. If elected, I will do my part to continue MASA's positive educational and political role as well as encourage greater participation in the organization by all of its members.

Your support would be appreciated. •



Dan Brooks

Dan Brooks, Sauk Centre Schools

Bottom-line, providing leadership in our public schools and communities is plain and simple, "hard work!" My wife likes to

tell me that my motto ought to be "if it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing." When it comes to advocating for student opportunity in our public schools there should not be any less of a commitment. Having worked with many of you in various projects and capacities, I know that you share these same feelings. Spending 30+ years working to improve the lives of children, families, and communities through public education has certainly had many rewards. However, we all know that the challenges that face us on a daily basis continue to grow and at times seem to dwarf the rewards.

With the ever increasing challenges in mind, I am honored to accept the nomination of our incoming President, Dr. Tom Westerhaus, for the position of MASA President-Elect. If I elected, you likely will see the "overdoing" as we work together to keep MASA at the forefront of the discussion on the challenges public schools face everyday.

Lack of funding, for mandates whether they be in special education or GASB 45, must certainly lead the list of challenges. This debate is absolutely not about whether these and many other mandates are good things because they are. The debate is about legislators at both the state and federal level having the political will to fund the good things they require. Our leadership has positioned MASA to

D. Brooks continued on page 15



John Landgaard

John Landgaard, Worthington Schools

The strong and rich tradition of being a leader in the educational world, Minnesota needs to

continually advocate for students in order to promote their future ability of success. This continued advocacy role is a primary responsibility of educational leaders and has been a strong and productive mission of MASA. I hope we will continue this positive approach to advocating for districts (students) across Minnesota. MASA is and continues to be the organization that links other groups, provides member support, a voice for K-12 education and carries the voice for progressive reform. This is what makes MASA the premier professional organization in Minnesota.

I am humbled and honored to have been nominated for President-Elect of MASA. I have been an administrator for sixteen years of which the last twelve have been in Minnesota serving as a Superintendent of three different districts. In my career, I have worked to be active professionally and in my communities. I believe that I have developed the skills, experience and characteristics that will assist me in the position of President-Elect. With the support of my family, friends, peers and others, I know that this will afford me the opportunity to be successful in the position of leadership for MASA.

Along with this, our goals will be supported with the continuance of excellence, member support through

J. Landgaard continued on page 15

Dan Brooks ... Continued from Page 14

impact the funding debate for these unfunded mandates and to impact public education policy. My pledge would be to tirelessly continue to facilitate MASA's focus on improving student opportunity and achievement for all students.

As I request your support in permitting me to be a part of the current MASA leadership team, I assure you that no one can be more passionate about public education than I am. This passion leads me to know that MASA must continue to be the catalyst for leadership in our schools and communities on our pathway towards Minnesota's Promise: World-Class Schools, World-Class State!

Presidency Goals:

- Provide leadership in promoting public education within our membership established organizational goals.
- Represent MASA membership tirelessly as an advocate for World-Class student opportunity.
- Promote and pursue collaboration to strengthen MASA efforts at making children and learning Minnesota's highest priority.
- Emphasize the preparation of public school leaders as the key to ensuring student opportunity and success.
- Help MASA and our public celebrate the many, many successes of public education. •

John Landgaard ... Continued from Page 14

professional growth for new and experienced members, strong links to other organizations that assist in the continued growth of Minnesota's educational system, being a positive and progressive voice for K-12 education and continued quality communication to members as well as others in the State. I hope to have the privilege to work for the members of MASA to promote this outstanding organization and continue its strong tradition as a leader for public education. For every tomorrow is a new invitation to outstanding possibilities.

I would appreciate your support and vote for MASA President-Elect. Thank you! •

POINT OF *view*

Thank You: For All You Do, This One's For You

By **Don Helmstetter**,
Superintendent, Spring Lake Park Schools and
2007 MN Superintendent of the Year

One of the benefits of being named Superintendent of the Year is the opportunity to talk to a variety of people about the challenging role of the superintendent in Minnesota schools.

I'm thrilled to represent all Minnesota superintendents this year, because, collectively, we are among the most thoughtful, hopeful, pragmatic, yet idealistic people in the state. We're the group that finds solutions and offers hope to our students and to our community.

When I'm asked about the most satisfying experiences as a superintendent, I'll often refer to when a first grade child read to me, or when a former student of mine, now a published author of children's books, came to an elementary school in my district to teach writing skills to eager fifth grade students.

Or I'll share stories of personal interactions with students, or their letters from college, because these are tangible pieces of evidence that we are making a difference. Let me emphasize that, we are making a difference.

So, as they say, this one's for you. Thanks for the difference that you make.

When asked by those not in the business "What's your *least* favorite job as a superintendent?" my response is always easy. When a snowstorm threatens, rising for the day at about 4:00 in the morning (if I sleep at all that night) to begin consulting with a variety of sources, including fellow superintendents, all in an effort to determine whether schools should start late or be held at all.

We all do it, and depending upon geography, some have to do it more frequently than others. And we hear about it from parents, no matter what decision is made. My colleagues in the business world have no idea.

I could also tell them about a colleague whose wife was accosted by a woman in a grocery store during a period when his school and others were discussing consolidation. The woman's tone and language was so abusive that the superintendent's spouse felt compelled to leave her shopping cart in the aisle and retreat from the store in tears.

Or I could tell them of another colleague whose board chair used to greet him at church following the service and slip into his hand a list of "To Dos" for the coming week that he just happened to think of (each week) while listening to the

sermon.

Or I might share any of the countless stories—that we all

have —of the legions of parents or staff who seem to take personally board action or administrative decisions and respond with vindictive, abusive language or behavior.

Those who compare us to executives in the business world will never know.

Yet, in spite of it all, we superintendents are often the first to arrive and the last to leave each day, and we love it. We put the health and well-being of our families and communities above all else, and we love it. We put children and their successes above all else and we really, really love it.

And, we probably wouldn't have it any other way.

So, for all that you do, whether noticed or unnoticed, and after all that you have accomplished for our children, on behalf of the entire state of Minnesota, thank you.

This one's for you. •



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The Next Stage[®]

Information Limitation: The Problem with Database - Only Searches

by **Tim Landsberger**
Director, The McDowell Agency, Inc.

With the growing concern for background check investigations, the background screening industry has exploded in recent years. Better technology, research resources, and training together have increased the ability of background investigators to deliver timely and accurate information to their customers.

Some employment screening firms offer a "nationwide" or "national" criminal background database and would suggest that this database includes the records of most, if not all, criminal jurisdictions in the country. There are over 10,000 state and federal courthouses in the United States, spread out over some 3,300 jurisdictions, each with its own records file. There is simply no "national" computer database of all criminal records available to private employers.

Many school districts, either unknowingly or as a compromise to their budget concerns, purchase these third-party criminal record database searches as a complete background investigation. As a result, these districts are receiving only limited records purchased from a meager patchwork of criminal jurisdictions over time.

One research firm ran the names of 500 convicted criminals through one of the most aggressive criminal records database companies. The results were frightening. Approximately 87% of the responses returned on these criminals were "no record found" or incomplete. Using a database product as a complete background investigation is like buying a bag of flour and expecting it to taste like apple pie.

The McDowell Agency, Inc. takes the position that database searches can be very useful, but *only* when used in conjunction with a record search done *by hand* at the county level. Database search products are dangerously inadequate and are guaranteed to be incomplete; we hold the position that selling them as a stand-alone service is insufficient.

The USA Criminal Index and National Sex Offender Registry are the two most comprehensive criminal database searches available and we recommend them in every package we sell. We often locate criminal records in jurisdictions where we would not have otherwise searched by running a database check. However, database searches have limitations. The most accurate criminal record histories are kept directly by the County Clerks of Court for each county in the United States.

What about the FBI database which is available to school districts by statute? Even the FBI database has significant drawbacks. First, the database relies primarily on the states

to reporting information to the FBI. There can be, and often are, significant differences between the states in the accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of their reports. This can even vary from county to county within each state. Additionally, the database is primarily an arrest database. The final disposition (or outcome) is often not reported, meaning information can be incomplete or erroneous.

The bottom-line: even though the FBI database is a good source of information, it is currently far from perfect. School districts need to keep in mind there can still be errors in these databases and criminal convictions can slip through the cracks. The best advice to obtain a thorough, complete background check is to supplement any database search with a courthouse search of relevant counties. •

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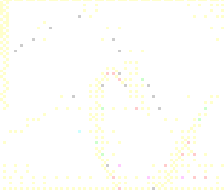
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Spring Cleaning ... Continued from Page 3

replaced the entry door and the stucco-like siding on the building. As with school buildings across the state, our association must continually invest in the upkeep of our building to keep it fresh and usable.

Another small change in the building will be the loss of one of our long-term renters, the Como Chiropractic office, which rented a good portion of the first floor of the building. They will keep a small presence in the building with an executive office but will be vacating a large area of their actual medical practice space. MASA is seeking another association to lease the space on the first floor of our building when it becomes vacant on July 1, 2007.

- Regional MASA membership meetings: I will be attending regional meetings all across the state this spring. I am trying to concentrate as many of the meetings as possible in April and June as there will be many important decisions to be made at the legislature in May regarding school funding and school reform.
- Eight MASA members will travel to Washington DC in mid-April to meet with Minnesota's congressmen and senators in regard to federal legislation that effects K-12 education. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) is being discussed right now in Washington. We will have our representatives in Washington to try influencing this process to the highest degree possible.
- MASA President-Elect, Tom Westerhaus, will meet other state association president-elects at the beginning of May hosted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). This National Leadership Conference will be an opportunity for Tom to meet the emerging leadership of the state associations from all over the country. This year's meeting is in Tampa, Florida, which will also be the location of next year's national conference on education. •

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Session II- Wednesday, May 9, 2007

Session III- Tuesday, August 14, 2007

Session IV- Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Investing ... Continued from Page 9

violence, having easy access to illicit substances, tobacco, alcohol and firearms and believing that one's life is likely to be short.

The perpetration of violence and drug use drops by as much as 25 per cent when youth who are subjected to the same patterns of risk behavior are involved in circumstances which afford them the protective factors such as feelings of academic competence and future aspirations, safety and spirituality, and peer norms which encourage abstinence from drug use.

Funding for "Safe and Drug Free Schools", Title IV of the Federal programs designed to foster programs of prevention and intervention, is estimated to drop by an additional eighteen percent for 2007-2008. This pattern of waning resources is demoralizing to the energetic and committed individuals who champion the cause of prevention of violence and drug use among our students. Many of these practitioners have taken on roles of school guidance counselors, deans or social workers and work to foster prevention efforts even as they deal with lunchroom supervision and registration for classes. The "luxury" of a staff position for chemical health prevention is becoming extinct as districts recover from failed referenda or seek to preserve reasonable class sizes in times of enrollment decline.

Thankfully, a climate of nurturance and affirmation for all students is not as costly as one might think. Raising adult awareness of the powerful outcomes associated with a student's feeling that success is attainable and someone cares that you're reaching for it is a relatively low-cost enterprise. Let's invest in it.

NOTE:

For more information about the Investing in Youth Program of Suburban Ramsey County, contact marysue.hansen@isd623.org More information is also available from Dr. Michael Resnick at the Healthy Youth Development Prevention Research Center at the University of Minnesota (<http://www.med.umn.edu/peds/gpah/faculty/resnick/home.html>)

•

Mark your calendar ...

MASA 2007 Fall Conference

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Silence ... Continued from Page 10

participation. Do the same with district procedures on student events, etc.

- Discuss with staff how participation will be handled, as well as the concerns they should be watchful for. Establish how issues will be dealt with and by whom.
- Consider whether there will be a need for parent, community or media reaction or involvement and how the district will address these issues.
- Review your concerns and plans with your school counsel in advance. This may streamline issues that come up later and keep your district from being surprised by developments related to the Day of Silence.

Q: How can we address and balance the many views on these sensitive issues and the reaction to them?

A: You probably can't please everyone on difficult topics. However, the best approach is to focus on **respectful behavior** toward each other, not necessarily total agreement with the views of others. This approach is furthered by the model policies on harassment & violence; bullying; and hazing.

Q: How can we learn more about this?

A: Try the website which is www.dayofsilence.org as a starting point for your research. Also, the NEA has helpful information on this event on its website, www.nea.org. •

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Cotton Candy ... Continued from Page 1

challenges that threaten to consume us on a regular basis, and that is why it is so critical to make an intentional effort to allow ourselves to recognize the good that we are doing and bookmark those specific episodes that will feed our sense of self-worth and accomplishment now and in the future.

Keep up the terrific work that you are doing in advocating and providing for the children and young people in our districts. Know that you are appreciated for being a professional with a *calling* to assist in making the world a better place! Go forth and continue doing great things – making note of your cotton candy career moments along the way!!

•

MASA Offers Job Information Online

*Perhaps you will be in need of a job,
or considering a job change?*

MASA supports an electronic education job listing service. It is called the MASA Jobsite and Applicant Site Online. The Jobsite has listings of educational jobs for about 200 of Minnesota's school districts. Job seekers can browse the site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Job hunters can browse posted positions and electronically file their resume material at no cost. The Jobsite/Applicant site simplifies the hiring process for both candidates and school districts. The Site's search capabilities allow candidates to review positions by vacancy, category and geographic location.

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For Your Information...

February Visitors for 2007 were:

- Total Visitors for the month: 42,337
- New Visitors to the Site: 9,216

New MASA Staff Person

The MASA Staff would like to welcome Jamie Hultgren to our staff! Jamie comes to us as a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus. She is currently working with us part-time and also has a role in the play "The Merchant of Venice" at the Guthrie Theatre. Welcome Jamie!

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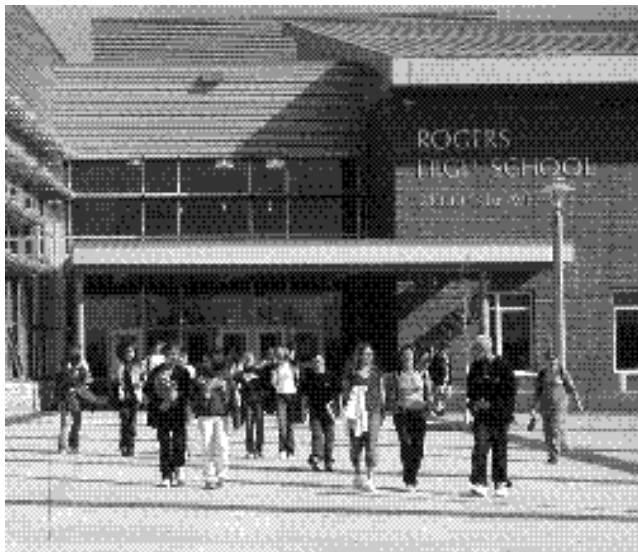


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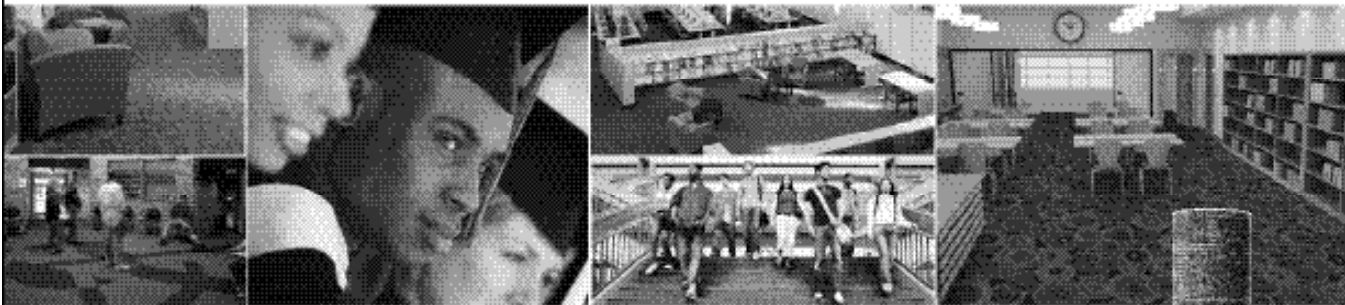
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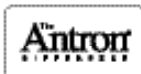


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Calendar 2007

March 14
**Great Start Workshop V
 &
 Year 2 Cohort III**
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel,
 Bloomington

March 14
**MASA Executive
 Committee Meeting**
 9:30 - 11:30 am
**MASA Board of Directors
 Meeting**
 1 - 4 pm
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel,
 Bloomington

March 15-16
**MASA & MASE Spring
 Conference**
 Sheraton Bloomington
 Hotel,
 Bloomington

March 21
MASA Region 9 Meeting
 4 Points Sheraton Hotel,
 Minneapolis

March 28
MASA Region 3 Meeting
 Worthington

March 28
Fresh Start Workshop I
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

March 28
MASA Region 3 Meeting
 Worthington

April 6
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

April 10
MASA Region 7 Meeting
 Duluth

April 25
MASA Region 5 Meeting
 Staples

May 1
MASA Region 1 Meeting
 Rochester

May 9
Fresh Start Workshop II
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

May 11
**Newsletter Submissions
 Due**

May 14
MASA Region 6 Meeting
 St. Cloud

May 23
MASA Region 2 Meeting
 Mankato

May 28
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

June 6-7
MASA Region 8 Meeting
 Baudette

June 19-20
**MASA Board of Directors
 Retreat**
 Minneapolis Central Library

July 19-22
**AASA Summer Leader-
 ship
 Conference**
 Minneapolis

August 14
Fresh Start Workshop III
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

Fun Facts

"It takes a village to raise a child."

--African proverb

Good news!

According to an article in the April 23, 2001 issue of News-
 week, we're getting smarter.

Intelligence test scores have risen steadily and significantly
 over the years. In the United States, for example, scores
 have risen 24 points since 1918—a rise so large that what
 used to be considered a genius score is now pretty com-
 mon. The scores have puzzled psychologists, who at one
 time believed that IQ was gene-related and not influenced
 by environment. Now, however, researchers are beginning
 to believe that both genes and environment can shape IQ, a
 theory known as the Flynn effect. Library, anyone?

(from "Are We Getting Smarter?" by Sharon Begley)



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