

If Not Me, Who?

by **Kathy Leedom,**
2006-07 MASA President
and Superintendent, Willmar Schools

At our March MASA Board of Directors meeting we viewed the DVD, "Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things," produced by the Farmers' Insurance Group. This production highlights often well-known people who had humble beginnings and went on to accomplish terrific and sometimes mind-boggling things.

Following our review of the DVD, I asked each Board member to recall an example from their own experiences of ordinary people carrying out extraordinary things. Talk about a deep, rich, poignant, remarkable sharing of examples! All of us around the table were mesmerized by the examples that came forth from our peers who readily recalled family members and acquaintances who had or were doing almost Mother Theresa level work of one type or another. To a person, colleagues shared example after example of people sacrificing and giving in selfless, humble ways. It was amazing to note how these acts often began in an unassuming manner like a pebble being thrown in the water only to ripple out and impact others in resounding ways. Clearly, our members relating these accomplishments had been personally touched, as were the rest of us through their sharing.

These examples remind me of a question that I have been hearing a lot lately – "If not me, who?" This question likely was the type of personal challenge that many of the people referenced above were asking themselves when they decided to embark on their journeys that led to making the positive differences that they inevitably have made in this world. The question is also one that resonates with educational leaders.

"If not me, who?" is a question that provokes all kinds of possibilities when we think of the challenge that this question poses to leaders. Educational leaders are faced with this question on a regular basis as we contemplate what is best for children and young people. As we reflect on our duty to be a voice for children, we may look around the room to determine who might speak up only to be met with a mirror telling us that we are the ones charged with speaking up, with advocacy, with modeling behaviors, with

living out the Golden Rule. Often sensitive topics like race, religion, immigration, sexual preference, family structure, socioeconomic status, and many other subjects become a part of our lives in public education, and as leaders we are faced with the advocacy and equity question, "If not me, who?"



Kathy Leedom

I see so many of our colleagues responding in resounding ways to this question that just begs for action. I admire the people who almost effortlessly show up, speak up, take the right steps, and approach with conviction situations that surround us every day. Their results are often extraordinary in the eyes of another who has benefited from the advocacy. Some people have mastered this almost sacred obligation of school leaders.

"If not me, who?" is our personal call to action, and the question, "If not us, who?" is our collective call to action as an organization. Opportunities abound to which we may respond. We are as successful as we are prepared to meet these opportunities.

I wish to conclude my year as President of MASA by thanking you for being prepared and for being involved in our leadership advocacy. Any collective success that we have earned has resulted from leaders stepping forward
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Teachers As School Leaders



Charlie Kyte

by **Charlie Kyte**,
MASA Executive Director

We are beginning to hear more reports from school districts that have taken up the challenge of adopting alternative compensation (Q-Comp) programs in their school districts. These alternative compensation programs provide teachers with a much greater leadership role in their own professional development and also in their responsibility for student results

and learning. However, the program still has a somewhat checkered pattern of success. We hear of places where the districts are moving forward positively and we hear of other places where this program is still struggling.

This article is based on comments from school superintendents the alternative compensation programs seem to be thriving. In those districts, teachers have stepped into leadership roles to take responsibility for student learning. The money available allows a number of teachers to be paid some additional compensation for their leadership roles.

The teacher leaders are guiding significant resources into high quality, ongoing professional development for the teaching staffs and the professional development is taking a different approach than we have seen in the past. Gone are the large group, one time-one subject presentations. In their place are ongoing small group meetings in which teachers dissect their own teaching skills, look at student data to determine how students are learning, and collectively change their approaches for individuals and small groups of students.

In the districts using the alternative compensation program successfully, teachers are moving the teaching/learning process even better than the more traditional model where administrators encourage teachers to make progress. The teachers themselves, now empowered, are moving ahead in terms of individualizing and analyzing the learning of their children.

One of the characteristics common to these successful districts is that top-level administrators (superintendents and principals) understand the value of empowering employees to take responsibility and leadership. Thus, they put the resources in the hands of their teacher teams so they can lead the effort. Also present is progressive union leadership. Union leaders are interested in creating strong and responsive education programs. They are willing to let innovative

ideas by their colleagues emerge as these programs come together.

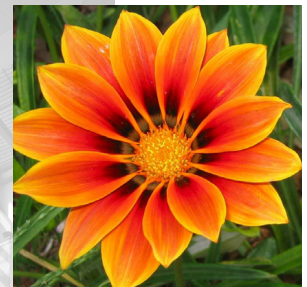
Where the Q-Comp programs are not working, you see administrators who are uncomfortable with empowering their staffs. Union leadership is more interested in controlling power than encouraging their members to innovate and become resourceful educational leaders.

While the jury is still out on the Q-Comp program, indications from districts in which teachers and administrators have rolled up their sleeves to work together are very positive. We are hopeful that as more time passes, researchers will begin significant studies to track whether this collaborative approach to running schools, and directing teaching and learning, pays significant results in terms of student achievement. •

Education Facts

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If Not Me ... Continued from Page 1

and realizing that we are the ones that must lead the way in making a positive difference through education. Our work is far from finished, and I hope that you find time to refresh a bit during the summer so that you are ready in the fall to be a part of responding to the question, "If not us, who?" Many thanks, everyone! •

Are You Moving?

Now is the time of year when many of our members are on the move! Help us keep track of you (and therefore keep your MASA benefits and services coming to you!). Just give Jeanna a call (651/645-6272 or 866/444-5251), fax her a note (651/645-7518), or email her at members@mnasa.org and she will update your records. Also, if you have new colleagues in your area who are not MASA members, let us know and we will send membership information to them. •

The Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund

by **Dan Brooks**
2007-08 MASA President-Elect
Superintendent, Sauk Centre Schools

Diplomats and politicians frequently speak of the need for peace, cultural understanding, belief in diversity and friendship among the nations of the world. However, there can be little question that the responsibility for the actual achievement of these goals lies with each of us as individual contributors to our world. One of my goals in seeking election to the Presidency of MASA is that of "tirelessly advocating for World Class student opportunity." We can often best advocate when we have walked the walk. As such this last October, I had the opportunity to spend three weeks studying schools and more in Japan with the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program.

At one time, Japanese and Americans lived in separate and very different worlds. Our languages, customs, political systems, and religions were very, very different. However, over the years these two worlds have come to be much closer. Now, we share many common values such as freedom, democracy, and an appreciation of and respect for human dignity. Through education, the smaller island nation without significant natural resources has become the world's second largest economy. This happened in large part because public education, much like in the United States, plays a keen role in shaping the development of their society. Based upon the above values, our alliance has become stronger than ever and our economies have become intertwined to the point of integrally leading the "world" economy.

Our study of Japan's schools, albeit somewhat short, affirmed for me that there are things for us to learn from other systems but it also demonstrated that public education in America is doing a lot of things right. I was impressed with their students' work in individual responsibility, environmental education, language mastery and fine arts. Our efforts in special education, vocational programming and gender equity certainly stand out.

The JFMF program provides a wonderful opportunity for educators to experience and promote a greater intercultural understanding between two nations. Many of you owe

yourself at least a look at what this program might have to offer for you and/or staff members in your schools. Teachers, including administrators, from all disciplines and grade levels are accepted in this program. Information can be found at: <http://www.fulbrightmemorialfund.jp>

I would also be most happy to talk with anyone interested in this learning experience.

I've also had the opportunity to study public schools in France and Denmark. A couple of my thoughts echo and reflect what I hear many of you say about your studies abroad. We have a lot to be thankful for in our public schools! Yet we know that if we're to continue with economic development, in our ever more global world, we need to glean from these other systems and make use of what works even better. Resoundingly, our study also demonstrates that "World Class student opportunity" takes resources.


While the ink is not yet dry on legislative action, it is difficult to understand how politicians believe that we should be entering into many new and exciting initiatives for World Class student opportunity when we receive foundation aid increases that do not even account for inflation. Obviously we still have a lot of work to do in our quest to have World Class student opportunity fully and adequately funded in our state. Experiences like the JFMF program help us to know what is possible if we are successful. •

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Bits 'n Pieces Summer 2007



Shari Prest

by Shari Prest,
Ark Associates

Bits 'n Pieces is provided by MASA, MESPA and MASSP as Champions for Children™. Feel free to use any of the following content in newsletters, web sites, speeches, or as a part of other communications as with stakeholders.

Summer is an ideal time for school leaders to strengthen relationships with parents, students, staff, local businesses, government representatives, and/or any community members with whom communications may be overlooked during the academic year.

The support you will need in the *future* may depend on the relationships that are built and the perceptions that are formed *now*.

Just the Facts

Bragging Rights

- Minnesota children, along with the children from three other states, have the greatest “Chance for Success.” – Quality Counts Report 2007, *Cradle to Career*, Education Week, January, 2007
- Minnesota excels in ten of the thirteen *Chance for Success* indicator areas, including family income, parents' level of education, and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores. – Quality Counts Report 2007, *Cradle to Career*, Education Week, January, 2007
- Our learners and schools rank in the top four nationally in elementary and secondary academic performance. – Quality Counts Report 2007, *Cradle to Career*, Education Week, January, 2007

Parenting

- What children eat can affect their concentration, their behavior, and the trajectory of their development. – Kids Count Data Book 1007, Children's Defense Fund Minnesota
- More children below the Federal Poverty Guideline are overweight than those in other income categories as a result of the high concentration of fat, sodium and sugar in low cost foods.
- Nearly 70% of Minnesota's young children have all their parents in the workforce.
- 90% of Minnesota parents live in neighborhoods that are usually or always safe. – Kids Count Data Book 2007, Children's Defense Fund
- 85% of brain development occurs by the age of 5
- According to the National Institute of Media and the Family, six prominent medical groups (American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychological

Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians and the American Psychiatric Association) warn of these effects of media violence on children:

- ✓ Children will increase anti-social and aggressive behavior.
- ✓ Children may become less sensitive to violence and those who suffer from violence.
- ✓ Children may view the world as violent and mean, becoming more fearful of being a victim of violence.
- ✓ Children will desire to see more violence in entertainment and real life.
- ✓ Children will view violence as an acceptable way to settle conflicts. (Congressional Public Health Summit, 2000)

Red Flags taken from Minnesota State Senate Majority Research, 2007

- **Economic Indicators:** Minnesota's GDP ranking plummeted from 15th (1997-2004) to 40th (2004-2005) in real GDP growth rates.
- More people are dropping into poverty. Between 2000 and 2005, the poverty rate in Minnesota has grown by 17%. (DEED)
- **Transportation:** The cost of congestion increased from \$541 million in 1996 to \$975 million in 2003.
- **Housing:** The Twin Cities' Housing Opportunity Index (HOI) dropped from 9th (1995) to 76th (Q3, 2006) among 203 metropolitan areas.
- **K-12 Education:** Minnesota's investment in K-12 spending dropped from 15th in the nation (1998) to 22nd (2004).
- **School Funding:** Minnesota's fiscal crisis has taken a toll on Minnesota schools. A study, conducted by the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, shows that Minnesota ranked 46th out of the 50 states in per pupil K-12 spending growth between 1997 and 2002. States that typically rank low on K-12 spending, including Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas, far outpaced Minnesota. The national average spending growth was 16.8%. Minnesota's growth was 9.4%.
- **Technology:** Last year, Education Week ranked Minnesota 49th in the nation, giving the state a “D” in technology when considering innovations and programming for our school children. – Minnesota Senate Majority Research
- **Higher Education:** Minnesota dropped from providing 69.7% (1999-2000) to 50.6% (2006-2007) of tuition costs.
- **Uninsured Children:** The number of uninsured children in Minnesota grew from 44,000 in 1999 to 68,000 in 2004.
- **Natural Resources:** Minnesota's ranking among the states for natural resources spending as a percentage of state budget dropped from 10th in 1999 to 17th in 2003.

Change taken from *What If?* Fischbowl Presentations, 2007
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- In just the few minutes it takes you to read this letter, 60 babies will be born in the United States, 244 will be born in China and 351 will be born in India.
- Soon China will have more people fluent in English than the United States.
- The top 25% to 28% of the population in China and India with the highest IQs is greater than the entire population of North America.

Public Education taken from *Kids Count Data Book 2007*, Children's Defense Fund

- There are 828,364 children enrolled in Minnesota's public schools including the following:
 - ✓ 58,974 (7.1%) with limited English proficiency.
 - ✓ 103,838 (12.5%) receiving special education services.
 - ✓ 58,411 (86.2%) of Minnesota's public school students graduate from high school on time.
 - ✓ Over 50% of Minnesota public school teachers have a master's degree or above.
 - ✓ 15% of Minnesota's public school students transferred schools during the school year. Among Minnesota Counties that percentage ranged from 3.9% to nearly 30%.

Taxes

- Minnesota ranks 18th among the 50 states when averaging all of Minnesota's important taxes. – WCCO TV, *Reality Check*
- Minnesota ranked 37th in the amount of state and local property taxes paid per \$1,000 of personal income and 8th in the amount of state and local income taxes paid. – Minnesota Taxpayers Association
- Minnesota ranks 28th per \$1,000 of income in state and local expenditures on K-12 education. – *How Does Minnesota Compare Fiscal Year 2004 Comparisons*, Center For Public Finance Research, 2004
- State aid to schools would be \$1.026 billion higher than it is if inflationary increases had been granted since 2002-03. – Star Tribune, Sunday May 20, 2007
- We are already investing less of the state's income in the underpinnings of prosperity—good schools, access to health care, quality employers, functional infrastructure and a pleasant environment. – Star Tribune, Sunday May 20, 2007, *Do state taxes really make the wealthy walk?*, Charlie Quimby, communication fellow, Dane Smith, president of Growth & Justice, a nonpartisan economic think tank
- In 2005 a Growth & Justice study showed no clear pattern of dollars flowing from states with high income taxes to states with no or low income taxes. In fact four of the 10 highest-tax states, including Oregon, with the highest income tax rating in the nation, gained income from migration. The states that lost the most proportionally were mostly low-tax states. – Star Tribune, Sunday May 20, 2007, *Do state taxes really make the wealthy walk?*, Charlie Quimby, communication fellow, Dane Smith, president of Growth & Justice, a nonpartisan economic think tank
- As of 2006 Minnesota ranked 15th in millionaires per 1,000 households. Five no tax-states ranked lower. -- Star Tribune, Sunday May 20, 2007, *Do state taxes really*

make the wealthy walk?, Charlie Quimby, communication fellow, Dane Smith, president of Growth & Justice, a nonpartisan economic think tank

Quotes and Quotables

Leadership

- “Pick battles big enough to matter—small enough to win.” – Jonathan Kozel
- “You don't have to be great to get started but you have to get started to be great.” – Les Brown
- “If it appears I can see further than others, it is because I am standing on the shoulders of giants.” – Sir Isaac Newton

Change

- “A quiet revolution is taking place across America, placing a premium on our greatest natural resource—the human mind.” – Art Costa, Emeritus Professor of Education at California State University, Sacramento and Co-founder of the Institute for Intelligent Behavior in El Dorado Hills, California
- “Kids need to learn how to leap across disciplines because that is how breakthroughs now come about.” – Claudia Wallis and Sonja Steptoe, *Time*, December 18, 2006
- “Pretend to innovate and lose.” – Chinese factory sign

Communities

- “Nothing you do for children is ever wasted.” – Garrison Keillor
- “Much of the work of asset building occurs for free. It is the stuff people do in their everyday lives.” – Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., Search Institute

Perspectives

- “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Martin Luther King
- “We do not seek to have our way, but to find a common way.” – G.P. Morris
- “If you give us standards give us the wherewithal to meet them.” – Mario Cuomo
- “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.” – Albert Einstein

Red Flags

- More Americans can name the characters in the Simpsons or the judges on American Idol than can name the five rights covered by the First Amendment, according to the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum. – Public Agenda Online, March 2006
- “The biggest challenge this generation of lawmakers faces [is] preparing for a future in which prosperity will depend more than ever on a well-educated workforce, even as the average age of the population becomes older than ever.” – Star Tribune, May 20, 2007, Lori Sturdevant

Just for fun

- “Be obscure clearly.” – E.B. White
- “I've always been in the right place at the right time. Of course, I steered myself there.” – Bob Hope •

The Chronically Difficult Employee: What's An Employer to Do?



Charles E. Long

by Charles E. Long, Attorney
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered

Unfortunately, most school districts have at least one chronically difficult employee. This is the employee who consistently fails to meet expectations yet never does anything so egregious to warrant immediate discharge. At some point, however, the school district must take corrective action.

To do so, it will need to demonstrate that the employee had fair notice of

the shortcomings and has failed to change or remediate the conduct. To improve its odds of meeting these burdens, school district administrators should consider the following principles:

1. The personnel file should tell the story. Formal evaluations often provide the first and best opportunity for a written indication of a performance problem. Too often, however, supervisors allege “ongoing” performance problems at the time discipline is being imposed, without ever clearly presenting the problem to the employee or down playing its importance. Inconsistencies between the written evaluation and a supervisor’s subsequent oral recollection of a problem will decrease the likelihood that disciplinary action will be upheld. Thus, it is important that deficiencies or other concerns be noted in evaluations if they will be later relied upon to support discipline or termination.

Likewise, supervisors often present anecdotes regarding an employee’s past performance problems or will recall concerns expressed by others as a basis for discipline. However, a review of the personnel records reveals no documentation of the previous problems now being recalled. Because school districts are often required to demonstrate “progressive discipline,” or a pattern of increasing discipline before more severe forms of discipline are upheld, a written history of prior warnings and actions is essential to support later disciplinary action.

2. Administrators have the authority and obligation to establish and enforce high performance standards. When a supervisor’s conduct is being reviewed for purposes of determining liability in cases involving claims such as discrimination or sexual harassment, the legal inquiry often boils down to the question: “What did the employer know, when did it know it, and what did it do about it?” If the problem behavior or concern was brought to a supervisor’s attention and no meaningful action or response was taken,

the School District’s defense is jeopardized.

School Districts should adopt clear policies relating to employee complaints, harassment, and discrimination. Supervisory staff should be trained to properly handle employee complaints and to take them seriously. Supervisors should receive information regarding which types of complaints require formal action. An internal procedure for processing employee complaints should also be made available to supervisors and an appropriate person should be selected to conduct an investigation, if warranted, after a complaint is received. At a minimum, supervisors should be instructed to contact the human resources department if they have any doubts about how to properly address a complaint or concern.

Supervisors sometimes avoid making difficult disciplinary decisions if they realize a problematic employee will not be assigned to the supervisor much longer. Supervisors may also attempt to “transfer” a problem employee somewhere else rather than deal with the employee. While those strategies may relieve near-term headaches for the individual supervisor, they can prolong the problem for the school district. Typically, the employee’s deficiencies resurface at the new location and the new supervisor is left trying to explain why his or her opinion that the employee is deficient is not consistent with the evaluations of prior supervisors.

3. Utilize progressive discipline. Certain conduct is so serious that the employee must be discharged immediately. In the case of the chronically difficult employee, discipline will likely stem from a pattern of less serious conduct. School districts are often required to demonstrate “progressive discipline,” or a pattern of increasing discipline before more severe forms of discipline are upheld. Progressive discipline ranges from verbal or written reprimands to formal notices of deficiency up to suspension and, finally, termination. Each step should be clearly documented and reflected in the employee’s file.

4. Treat employees fairly and consistently. Supervisors need to know how the school district has traditionally handled employee discipline. If the school district has been lax in enforcing its rules, it may have a difficult time justifying the discipline. This does not mean the school district is forever precluded from enforcing the rules, however. But the district will have to notify employees of its intent to enforce all rules as written.

Chronically Difficult ... Continued on Page 21

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Reflections On the 2007 Legislative Session



by **Charlie Kyte**
Executive Director, MASA

In looking back on the 2007 legislative session, several short statements come to mind.

- Much was done in secret
- The Executive Branch holds much of the power
- Schools fared well...and poorly
- Too much time spent on a secondary issue

Charlie Kyte

Much was done in secret:

Other than the Education Committee chairs, leaders of the House and the Senate and Governor's office, almost no one was aware of the education bill as it finally came together. Many hearings were held in the Senate and the House during the legislative session regarding education, but the two bills did not match up.

Once the bills had passed the committees of the Senate and House, they would normally go to a conference committee. However, this year the Education Bill was sidelined while the arguments between the legislature and the governor continued.

By the later days of the legislative session, it became apparent that not even the conference committee members of the Senate and the House were aware of what the bill would contain. By the final days of the legislative session, we were able to piece together the general parts of the bill but did not see the language of the bill nor the individual school district runs until nearly the last minute.

The Executive Branch holds much of the power:

Minnesota has a strong executive branch of government and a strong-willed governor ultimately gets much of his way in regard to the budgets for the state. The governor said there would be no new tax increases. In spite of what the Legislature tried, in the end there were no tax increases. The governor insisted on certain provisions and many of the bills containing his provisions were included in the K-12 bill.

Schools fared well...and poorly:

School districts received a reasonable increase in funding for the first year of the biennium. They received 2% on the main education formula. In addition, they received substantial money for special education to close the gap that had widened over the last several years causing many school districts significant harm. Finally, districts received some one-time money that could be used for a range of capital needs. Overall, districts received between 3 1/2 and 5% of permanent ongoing money in the first year and 1% of additional money on a one-time basis.

The problem is in the second year of funding. Schools receive 1% on their general education and associated

formulas and very little other money. They will receive some one-time money in the second year and a growth factor in the special education formulas. Overall, most school districts will receive about 1.2% new money in the second year of the biennium.

This leaves schools in a difficult position in terms of negotiating two-year contracts. We will be going back to the legislature and governor next year asking for additional money for the second year of the biennium. However, the money will only be available if there are greater revenues coming into the state of Minnesota than are forecast. It seems unlikely that the governor would accede to raising taxes or fees.

Too much time spent on a secondary issue:

Many of us who represent education spent hundreds of hours on the statewide health insurance pool bill that was being promoted so hard by Education Minnesota, and resisted so hard by almost all the rest of us. This issue has been a divisive one for about four years. The education lobby fighting each other on this bill uses much energy. We should be pulling together for a better funding stream for K-12 education. It is my hope that this issue will finally be put to rest and we can once again start pulling together. Without all of the forces aligned within public education, it is unlikely we will ever see adequate funding for our K-12 schools. •



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Designing & Building Schools With the End In Mind



Arif Quraishi

by Arif Quraishi
Area Solutions Manager
Johnson Controls, Inc.

Schools in Minnesota have been built the same way for many decades; however, everything else about education—technology, curriculum, students—has changed. As school administrators become more aware of the significant increase in operation and maintenance costs, the concept of designing

and building educational facilities with the lowest life cycle cost is becoming a reality in Minnesota. In addition, as data/research shows that a positive relationship exists between the condition of a school facility, student achievement and student behavior, the argument becomes even more compelling to construct schools with a long-term focus and avoid the first-cost mentality that permeates public projects.

Life Cycle Approach

A life cycle approach to school construction can have significant benefits not only in terms of reducing ongoing cost, but positively impacting students and teachers. A holistic approach to renovation and construction is the best method for producing quality educational environments in which to learn, achieve and succeed. Facility designs must support long-term educational needs. This can be accomplished by:

- having a thorough understanding of the educational adequacy requirements;
- benchmarking against national best practices; and
- leveraging the skill set of all consultants, especially those with knowledge about school facility operation and maintenance (75% of life cycle costs are incurred after construction).

Improving Your Facilities With Age

Your facilities, if built for the long-term, can actually improve with age. Appropriate commissioning, operations and ongoing maintenance will assure your asset's condition improves every year. To achieve this, an operations and maintenance plan must address indoor air quality, peak operations efficiency, a planned approach to deferred maintenance and a reduction in unanticipated capital expenditures. A long-range facility asset management plan assures that your facilities are not just functional, but

current.

Financing More Building Than Budgets Allow

Often schools contain “buried treasures.” Whether it’s utilization of avoided costs for funding or targeted application of savings from facility improvements, there are other avenues available to increase construction budgets. Also, today’s existing funding approaches—alternative facility bonding, lease levy, deferred maintenance levy, safe schools levy, etc.—have the potential to increase available construction budgets.

The bottom line for school renovation/construction is clear ... with increasing operations and maintenance costs, schools have to consider ongoing costs early and often during the construction process. To put it another way, construction projects must start with “the end in mind.” •

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The Jobsite Online is a companion set of Internet web sites—Job Site and Applicant Site. These two MASA sites make posting jobs and looking for talented educators a snap.

We recognize that money is tight in most school districts and that some districts believe hiring will be at a minimum. In reality, there are always vacancies and job changes. In a year when finances are tight, the changes often come later in the summer and an online service helps you to quickly find applicants when they are needed.

This job service is cost effective. You can eliminate the need to make direct contact with placement bureaus and colleges. In the case that a variance is needed, the MASA

Jobsite qualifies as a widespread advertising vehicle eliminating the need to advertise in major newspapers. For the price of one ad in the Star Tribune or the Des Moines Register, you can nearly pay for the entire use of the MASA Jobsite for an entire year.

In addition, the MASA Jobsite lists all school district administrative job postings **free of charge to all school districts in the state.** Just call Jeanna Quinn at MASA (651-645-6272) or email her at members@mnasa.org. Jeanna posts jobs each Friday.

The real strength of this on-line job and applicant site comes with full participation of the districts in Minnesota. With strong district participation, applicants also flock to the site. Thus, it is easier for the districts to find quality applicants and we create a win-win situation.

Let the Jobsite help you fill those positions with "bright new members for your brilliant school district team!" •

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We have 810 applicants in the Applicant Site, which is the most ever, and we have 4.4 months to go in this year yet!

We also are just past mid month and have topped the June's historical total for every year except one. We should shatter that mark and it will be the 3rd straight month that we have done that.

Have you renewed your membership?

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

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The Results are In—Congratulations to Elected Leaders!



Dan Brooks

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

President-Elect: Dan Brooks, Sauk Centre

Board Members:

- Region 1—Bruce Klaehn, Dover-Eyota
- Region 3—Doug Froke, Windom
- Region 8—Larry Guggisberg, Roseau
- Region 9—Gary Amoroso, Lakeville
- Greater MN Central Office—Cindy Klingel, Mankato
- Urban Districts—Meria Carstarphen, St. Paul

2007-08 Committee Chairs and Chair-Elects:

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Scott Theilman, Albany, Chair-Elect

Executive Development Committee

Mark Wolak, Mahtomedi, Chair
Scott Staska, ROCORI, Chair-Elect

Member Services Committee

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Susan Burris, Cambridge-Isanti, Chair-Elect

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Bruce Novak, Cambridge-Isanti, Chair
Connie Hayes, Intermediate 917, Chair-Elect

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Gary Amoroso, Lakeville, Co-Chair
Jim Johnson, Monticello, Co-Chair
Jay Haugen, WSP-Mendota Heights-Eagan, Co-Chair-Elect
Ed Waltman, Mankato, Co-Chair-Elect

Minnesota Representatives to the AASA Governing Board

Don Helmstetter, Spring Lake Park
Jim Redfield, On Leave
Tamara Uselman, Perham-Dent
Jerry Walseth, Brainerd

AASA Executive Committee

Eric Bartleson, Plainview-Elgin-Millville

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

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Background Screening – Q & A

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

When the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) and The McDowell Agency, Inc. entered into a partnership one year ago, our goals were simply to educate school districts on the dangers of relying on the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) as a standalone search and provide a comprehensive affordable background check program to all Minnesota schools. The partnership has been a success as thirteen school districts that were previously only relying on the BCA are now using the MASA endorsed program. In almost every district we have found multiple records that would have been missed by a BCA only search including a convicted rapist applying to work in one of those districts just three months ago.

We thought it would be helpful to include a question and answer with the most common questions we have received from our school clients.

Question: Why do I need to do more than a Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) check?

Answer: By the BCA's own admission, their records are incomplete; they acknowledge additional records may exist at the county level on the reports they send. The most accurate criminal records are kept at the county level. In addition to being incomplete, the BCA records will only include crimes committed in Minnesota.

Question: I have seen companies advise a nation-wide database background check why do I need to do anything more than that?

Answer: Some 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. One research firm ran 500 convicted criminals through one of the largest national databases and 87% passed. The national database is an important part of any background check package, but should never be relied upon as a standalone search.

Question: How often do I need to screen my volunteers?

Answer: Most organizations will screen their volunteers every year. Others will screen every 2-3 years.

One organization we work with does a full screen every three years and a partial screen annually. The McDowell Agency, Inc. can customize a program to meet your needs and budget.

Question: Why do you need the applicant's or volunteer's social security number?

Answer: The social security number is an essential part of any true background check. The first thing this will do is verify that the social security number is valid and the person is indeed who they say they are. In addition, the trace will provide us with any aliases the volunteer or applicant may have used. The social security trace will also provide any additional addresses the volunteer or applicant may not have disclosed. Criminals know this is the best way to hide a criminal record.

Question: How many applicants or volunteers actually have criminal records?

Answer: The McDowell Agency, Inc. screened almost 100,000 employees and volunteers last year and found about 12% had criminal records.

Question: How long does it take to get the results of a background check?

Answer: Typically it will take 2-3 business days to receive results. In 2006, our average turn around time was 47 hours.

Any additional questions can be referred to:
Tim Landsberger
The McDowell Agency, Inc.
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We asked our members ...

What I Do To Promote Life Long Learning In My District

by **Greg Vandal**
Superintendent, Sauk Rapids-Rice Schools

This might be considered to be a bit of a nontraditional response. Clearly, our Community Education program is geared to providing learners of all ages wonderful opportunities. However, if life long learning can be found in life long engagement with learning communities, then our direct involvement with senior citizens through volunteer and outreach programs might qualify as one answer.

Our volunteer program taps into the resources of the RSVP network; I serve on that regional board in an effort to "leverage" services for seniors and schools alike. Our student involvement in area nursing homes—through adopted grandparent programs and frequent class visits—provides the residents an opportunity for positive interaction with children. Both our kids and the elderly benefit from these intergenerational experiences.

Even our annual Thanksgiving meal—co-sponsored by the local Rotary Club, the metro bus company, and the school—provides nursing home residents and shut-ins alike the opportunity for student interaction. Guests are served a wonderful meal in a school cafeteria by area cub scouts and student volunteers. The event is held in conjunction with the high school fall musical, and senior citizens who seldom are able to leave the confines of their residences enjoy an entertaining afternoon in a school setting! These activities promote both a quality life and they enrich our learning environment.

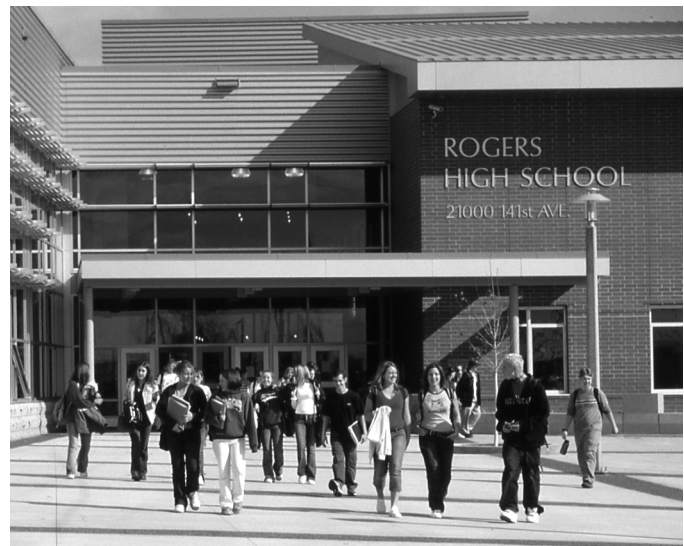
by **Jay Haugen**
Superintendent
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Schools

Being engaged in life long learning is at the core of what it means to be a professional. Life long learners have more success, and more joy in their work. As a superintendent these are two key messages I make a habit of communicating to staff. To keep these from being just words, I have strived to make a practice of what I preach. For instance, for 10 years now I have belonged to a professional study group with a small group of superintendents, a special education director, and a district court judge. We meet several times a year to discuss a book we have just read on topics such as leadership, organizations, social justice or the future. We relate each book to others we have studied and try to apply what we have learned to our own organization and lives. I talk openly with district staff about how important this group has been to me, and encourage members of both the principal's

leadership team and cabinet to do the same, both with themselves, and with their own staffs.

by **Cindy Klingel**
Curriculum Director, Mankato Area Schools

I try and take an overall approach that incorporates, promotes and models life long learning on an ongoing basis. I encourage colleagues to connect in networks with others who do the same work or similar work; to dialogue as an approach to decision making in order to have a better and more complete understanding of an issue or situation; to pursue advanced course work, degrees, and trainings; to engage in conversations around important topics; to seek and use data and research in making decisions; to build partnerships with others who have valuable resources; to consider leadership opportunities; and in general, to engage in professional dialogue and collaborative problem solving. •



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Minnesota's New Math Standards: Tips for District Administrators

by **Beth Aune**
Director, Academic Standards and High School Improvement
Minnesota Department of Education

The Minnesota Academic Standards in mathematics have been revised to reflect new expectations for the achievement of all students. Keep the following points in mind as you plan your district's implementation of the standards.

Implementation date - 2010-2011

There is time to thoughtfully prepare for the implementation of the new standards, but districts should start their planning activities soon so that next year's 5th graders will be ready for Algebra when they enter 8th grade.

Raised expectations for students

A major difference between the 2003 and 2007 standards is the progression of skills and knowledge that prepares all students to satisfactorily complete an Algebra I credit by the end of 8th grade (a graduation requirement for the class of 2015). This requirement raises the expectations for mathematics in 8th grade and impacts other grades, as well.

- In 7th grade, students must master material about proportional relationships and equations with variables.
- In 6th grade, students must master arithmetic with positive decimals and fractions.
- With the Algebra I requirement moving to 8th grade, high school students will have opportunities to experience a more thorough approach to geometry, statistics and probability, and to participate in more advanced mathematical topics throughout high school including the required-for-graduation Algebra II or its equivalent (class of 2015).

Other important differences in the revised standards include—

- Math reasoning integrated into other content strands rather than as a “stand-alone” strand;
- College and work readiness skills integrated into all strands;
- Increased attention to appropriate uses of technology such as calculators, and dynamic geometry software; and

- Greater coherence in the development of skills and concepts within grade levels and among grade levels.

Standards written at the mastery level

Because Minnesota's standards are written at the mastery level, many concepts and skills will need to be taught prior to the grade level designated for that standard.

Understanding standards across the grade levels

Provide teachers with opportunities to read, understand and discuss standards at all grade levels but especially the standards two grade levels below and two grade levels above their own grade level.

“What should we be doing differently?”

While a “mechanical” approach to curriculum mapping can identify gaps and overlap in a district's delivery of the standards, the standards implementation process requires teachers to engage in thoughtful conversations focused on the question above. Make time for this.

Changing the way we teach

Clearly communicate the message that the standards are not just about teaching more rigorous content. Students need to have different learning experiences in mathematics than they've had in the past.

Priorities for professional development

The first priority for professional development in 2007-08 is to prepare, at a minimum, all 5th and 6th grade teachers who teach mathematics. Assuming all 5th and 6th grade teachers have been prepared, consider extending professional development to teachers below grade 5 and above grade 6. Begin discussions soon with high school math teachers on the question, “How are we going to change what we teach, and how we teach and assess it, so that all students can be mathematically powerful?”

Professional development and technical assistance available

Regional Math and Science Teacher Academies, with funding appropriated by the 2007 Minnesota Legislature, will provide professional development and technical assistance to help all schools successfully implement the state's new math standards. •

Be sure to mark your calendars for the 2007 CLM Fall Conference focusing on the Math Standards, November 14-16, 2007 - Cragun's Resort, Brainerd.

Chronically Difficult ... Continued from Page 8

The discipline imposed should be reasonably related to the seriousness of the offense and the record of the employee. Arbitrators reviewing disciplinary penalties look at what is fair and equitable considering the seriousness of the offense and mitigating circumstances (such as the employee's work record), even if the school district has not. Trivial offenses do not merit harsh discipline unless the employee has been guilty of other offenses or the same offense previously. •

This article is intended to provide general information with commentary. It should not be relied upon as legal advice. If required, legal advice regarding this topic should be obtained from district legal counsel.

Chuck Long is an education law attorney with the law firm of Kennedy & Graven, Chartered. For more information, please contact him at (612) 337-9300 or www.kennedy-graven.com.


"I am convinced that it is of primordial importance to learn more every year than the year before. After all, what is education but a process by which a person begins to learn how to learn."

Peter Ustinov

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

**RAPID
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years ago to help school districts deal with organized referendum opposition. The MASA web site contains background information on anti-referendum campaigns and how school districts can prepare and respond. Visit the MASA web site today (www.mnasa.org)!

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Pictured Left to Right: Don Kreye, Chevron Energy Solutions; Gary Amoroso, Lakeville; Jenni Norlin-Weaver, Edina; Jane Sigford, Wayzata; Barb Knudsen, Shakopee; and Bob Ostlund, Wayzata

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Calendar 2007-2008

July 3-4
Independence Day Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

July 31
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 Territory Golf Club
 St. Cloud

August 2 & 3
Great Start Workshop I
 The Venue @ Galtier
 St. Paul

August 14
Fresh Start Workshop
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

August 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

August 15
MDE Superintendent Conference
 RiverCenter, St. Paul

August 16-17
MSBA Summer Conference
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

September 3
Labor Day Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

September 13-14
Midwest Leadership Summit
 Rochester

September 20
Great Start Workshop II & Year 2 Cohort I
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

September 21
Alliance for Student Achievement Education Summit
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

September 29
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9:30 - 11:30 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 1 - 5:30 pm
 The Inn on Lake Superior,
 Duluth

September 30
Board Meeting Continues
 9 - 11:30 am

September 30
MASA Foundation Golf Tournament
 12:30 pm
 Enger Park Golf Course,
 Duluth

September 30 - October 2
MASA Fall Conference
 Duluth Entertainment & Convention Center (DECC),
 Duluth

October 10 - 12
MASE Fall Directors' Conference
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

October 20
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

October 24
Fresh Start Workshop
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

November 9
Great Start Workshop III & Year 2 Cohort II
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

November 14-16
Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota Conference
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd

November 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

November 22 - 23
Thanksgiving Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

December 5
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9 - 10:45 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 11 am - 4 pm
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

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

2008...
 January 1
Winter Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

January 16
Great Start Workshop IV & Year 2 Cohort III
 Hyatt, Minneapolis

January 17-18
MSBA Winter Convention
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

February 6
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9 - 10:45 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 11 am - 4 pm
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

February 14 - 17
AASA National Convention
 Tampa, FL

February 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

February 16
MASA Foundation Board Meeting
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

March 27
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed

April 2
Great Start Workshop V & Year 2 Cohort IV
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

April 2
MASA Executive Committee Meeting
 9:30 - 11:30 am
MASA Board of Directors Meeting
 1 - 5:30 pm
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

April 3-4
MASA & MASE Spring Conference
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington

May 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

May 27
Spring Holiday
 MASA Offices Closed



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