

## Competing Demands and Learning Opportunities

by Ted Blaesing,  
**MASA President and  
 Superintendent, White Bear Lake Schools**

Summer is drawing to a close and fall is underway to include the start of a new school year. A school district leader needs to be an expert at balancing competing demands and to learn from as many sources as possible. The transition between summer and fall is one of the transitions that test our ability and skill to balance competing demands. For example, the month of August is a key month that tests every superintendent's leadership – staff meetings, start of school year speeches, new staff induction activities, and of course, probably a board meeting, last minute hires, etc.

Summertime is winding down here in Minnesota and for me this means attempting to juggle a couple of competing demands that are important in my life – fishing and leading. For my entire adult life I have been studying, observing and reading (yes, my goodness, reading) probably hundreds of books on the topic of leadership. For an even longer period of my life I have been studying, observing and reading (yes, my goodness,

reading) probably hundreds of articles on the topic of fishing. So I wonder, could these two topics possibly be related?



Ted Blaesing

Well, before we leave summer fishing too far behind, here are a few of my

observations that link these two topics of leadership and fishing. I hope they provide for you a little glimpse of simplicity in our complex leadership lives.

(See graph below)

The formal study of leadership is important and we need to keep our professional edge via reading and attending professional conferences. However, the lessons and secrets of leadership are not always buried within the pages of the latest book on this topic. They are all around us just beneath the surface of the water waiting to be discovered. Have a great year. I look forward to seeing you in the meetings this year, and maybe on the lake next summer.

FISHING	LEADING
People who fish tend to have special clothes to go fishing.	Look around next time you are at an MASA conference ... Leaders tend to dress in special clothes and "uniforms."
Some days, but not always, fishing is fun and exciting.	Some days, but not always, leading is fun and exciting.
Fishing is part science and part art.	Leadership is part science and part art.
Many, many times fishing is enjoyable not because of the act of fishing, but because of the people you are with and the good will, banter, and humor that occurs while fishing.	Many, many times leadership is enjoyable not because of the act of leading but because of the people that you are with and the good will, banter and humor that occurs while leading.
Most of the time, patience is very important in fishing, and as the old saying goes, "fishing is a jerk on the end of the line waiting for a jerk on the other end of the line."	Sometimes leading involves being very patient on your end of the line while you are being informed by the voices on the other end of the line that you are truly a jerk.
Sometimes fishing requires using everything in the tackle box to get the smallest of results.	Sometimes leadership requires using everything in the tool kit to get the smallest of results.
Fishing people sometimes enjoy stretching the truth as a gag or joke.	Leaders should never take liberties with the truth, unless it is clearly a gag or a joke.
Often you get invited fishing not because you are an expert at fishing but because you are you.	Often you get invited to events not because you are you but because you are in a position of leadership.
Some days, in spite of your very best efforts at fishing you are disappointed, and other times when least expecting it you get terrific results. Some call this luck.	Some days, in spite of your very best efforts at leading you are disappointed, and other times when least expecting it you get terrific results. I call this solid work.

**inside ...**

- Assessing the Legislative Session ..... 2
- Establishing Relationships ..... 3
- IDEA Reauthorization ..... 4
- The Only Way to Fly ..... 6
- Directing Our VOICE ..... 10
- Jobsite: A Unique System ..... 12
- Alternative Compensation ..... 14
- Bittersweet IDEA ..... 16
- Reflections on Moving ..... 20

## MASA Provides New Opportunities for New Superintendents and Second Year Members



Charlie Kyte

by **Charlie Kyte**,  
MASA Executive  
Director

Last year MASA began a series of “Great Start” workshops for new members.

This year we have broadened our reach and will be offering five “Great Start”

workshops throughout the year. The first occurred in July and the second in August, with the third in September. We have invited all new MASA members and new superintendents to attend these workshops. In addition, those members who attended the workshops last year have been invited to join a second year cohort group in which they will be able to learn more

and enhance their skills to a greater degree.

Much of the focus of the Great Start Workshops is on skill development in leadership, external communications, board relationships and school finance. There is also an important element of joining together with others going through a singular experience to develop personal relationships.

A number of the MASA members that attended the Great Start Workshops last year have become fast friends and are now enjoying each other's company and knowledge in the second year cohort. We hope that this will evolve again for the group starting this year.

This year the Great Start Workshops are being offered at no cost to our members and our ability to provide them has been significantly enhanced

by a very generous donation to the MASA Foundation from one of our retired members, Dale Birkeland, and his company, Midwest Management Resources. The grant provides the funding for the meeting spaces, the meals, the receptions and stipends for the presenters. The presenters are experienced members of MASA.

As we see a significant turnover in leadership of Minnesota's public schools, it is imperative that organizations such as MASA provide a significant investment in training the leaders of the future. We accomplish this mission through programs such as the Great Start Workshops and the Second Year Cohort. We are trying to do our part to help each of our new leaders become skilled in the complex leadership and management skills that are needed to create quality leaders for our public schools. •

## Assessing the Legislative Session... and Where Does This Lead Us for 2006

by **Charlie Kyte**  
Executive Director, MASA

The 2005 legislative session was very long and complicated. While the outcome for public education was not necessarily perfect for every school district, we came a long way to providing a decent level of funding and some new initiatives.

Here is a brief summary of some of the session highlights:

- Funding was adequate. 4% and 4% on the foundation formula translates to new money for school districts. 4% was also extended to categorical aids and there were a number of places where smaller levels of aid or levy were tucked into the bill.
- The 2005 legislature assumed that a part of the burden would be carried by local tax levies. Thus, part of the funding package was authorization for discretionary levies and in some cases increased levels of referendum. The legislature's plan was to create an environment in

which local school districts could access funding beyond what the state provided.

- There is an emphasis on increasing rigor of student achievement. Money was set aside for gifted and talented programs. Also, the “Get Ready, Get Credit” funding will help middle and high school students become more in tune to readiness for college and will help them earn college credits. The early testing provision for ACT tests for eighth or ninth graders will be helpful in having students understand their college preparedness.
- The professional pay (Q-Comp) program has promise, although it's not without difficulties. There is a significant amount of funding. \$192 per student is accessed in direct aid. In addition, the remaining \$68 will be in equalized levies. For most districts about 2/3 of this amount will be in levy and 1/3 will be direct aid. This program will help to make the performance and pay structure for

teachers more like that of “Knowledge Workers” employed in American business and less like “laborers” that are employed in the manufacturing industry.

Now that the session is over and we are digesting all that has happened, we need to begin to look forward to next year. The legislature has a short session next year beginning in March and ending in May. This is not the major funding session. However, if the state has sufficient revenues, there is some possibility of additional funding.

One of the decisions that will need to be made is how new funding, if available, should be invested. Should money be directed toward a significantly enhanced early childhood and kindergarten education effort, should it go into enhanced funding for specialized groups of students, should it be spread evenly over the foundation funding formula, or should we use it to equalize the again increased reliance on local levies so all school districts have a fair share of raising money? •

## Leaders Forum

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## Establishing Relationships with the Media

by **Beth Johnson**  
**Osseo Area Schools and**  
**President, Minnesota School**  
**Public Relations Association**

A recipe for successfully telling your good news and truthfully explaining your bad news:

4 C. phone conversation  
3 T. drop everything and run  
2 lb. building secretary training  
1 part pitch the story, 1 part answer the phone when they call

For a full, flavor-filled picture of your district, work with your reporters - knead that relationship, for when you need them, the relationship will prove to be the key ingredient.

First, pour plenty of time into getting to know the reporters who cover your district. Coffee with locals is a good way to discover their beat. By knowing the flavor of their media, you can adjust your seasoning to meet their stories and deadlines.

Second, when they call, drop everything to get them their story – today. Ask enough questions to get the right people and location for them in the time they need it. If it's a weekly paper, ask the deadline. On a tight deadline - waiting for the timer? Have one or two colleagues ready to back you up. Too busy means thousands will not see the good news going on in your district – are you really too busy for that kind of attention?

Third, train the front line staff to provide the ambiance and goodies necessary for the reporter to get all the ingredients together. An unknown reporter, just like an unknown recipe, needs more attention than that familiar family favorite. But always be kind; they have kids in our schools, too.

Finally, get out there and pitch that story. Why are some districts in the news all the time? Because they entice with the aroma of good stuff. Those special cookies only sell themselves if strategically placed where the aroma is too strong to ignore.

Don't let your district miss the next publication or broadcast. Put these items on the next staff meeting agenda, mix in your own special seasonings and watch the viewers eat up your good news. •

## Districts Offer LTC Insurance

The MN School District Long Term Care Insurance Program is endorsed by MASA with the MN School Boards Association and EM. Forty-one Districts participated in the 05 Spring Program and twenty-five additional districts committed to the fall of 05 enrollment period. More districts are coming on board every week.

The program has a 45 day open enrollment period that will terminate no later than December 31, 2005. Certified, non-certified and administrative staff can participate. FT employees will not have their health evaluated as long as there are five applications from a district. Spouses, relatives and part time employees can participate but their health will be evaluated.

Payments are made from individual's checking accounts rather than payroll deducted. Employees with chronic health conditions are being well served by the program. The underwriter is MedAmerica, owned by BCBS of upstate New York. Contact [gebersole@onlineltc.com](mailto:gebersole@onlineltc.com) for program information. 1-877-564-0182

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – Reauthorization: What School Administrators Need to Know About Discipline



Charles E. Long

by **Charles E. Long**  
**Attorney**  
**The School District**  
**Law Group of**  
**Kennedy & Graven**

On December 3, 2004, President Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Although

certain provisions were enacted immediately, the majority of the Act became effective on July 1, 2005. This article will discuss some of the primary changes that school administrators should know about student discipline as the new school year begins.

Congress has added to the short list of situations in which a school district may unilaterally change the placement of a special education student for up to 45 school days. In addition to possession of weapons (as defined by federal law to be “a device, instrument, material, or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury” but not a “pocket knife with a blade of less than 2 1/2 inches in length”) or possession of illegal drugs or controlled substances, school personnel may now remove a disabled student to an interim alternative educational setting if the student “has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.” For purposes of this provision, the term “serious bodily injury” is defined by federal law to mean “bodily injury which involves: a substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the

function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty.” As in the previous version of IDEA, the school district may utilize this procedure “without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the child’s disability.”

The method for determining whether a disabled student’s conduct is a manifestation of his or her disability has also been changed. The new law directs the IEP team to “review all relevant information in the student’s file, including the child’s IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents” and then determine whether: (1) the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child’s disability; or (2) the conduct in question was the direct result of the local educational agency’s failure to implement the IEP. If the IEP team determines that either test is applicable to the student, then the conduct must be determined to be a manifestation of the child’s disability. This standard is intended to be higher than that of the old IDEA, making it more difficult for a student’s conduct to be deemed a manifestation of disability.

If the team determines that the conduct was a manifestation of the child’s disability, then the team must: (1) conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan for such child (if one had not been done previously); (2) review the behavioral intervention plan (if one already exists) and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior; and (3) return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent and school district agree to change it as

part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan or if the conduct has resulted in a 45 day change in placement as discussed above.

One of the frustrations school administrators often express is that the issue of whether a student has a disability is never raised until the student is facing a disciplinary act such as expulsion or exclusion. The new law attempts to curb the ability of students not yet identified as disabled from invoking the IDEA’s protections in these situations. Now, a school district will be deemed to have knowledge that a student has a disability only if “before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred,” the parents have expressed concern in writing to school administration or the child’s teacher that the child may need special education, the parents have requested a special education evaluation of the child; or the child’s teacher or other school personnel have “expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the child, directly to the director of special education... or to other supervisory personnel.” A school district will not be deemed to have knowledge that the child has a disability if the parents have previously refused to allow the district to conduct a special education evaluation, if they have refused special education services, or if the child has been evaluated and found ineligible for services.

School administrators occasionally ask whether the school can require, for example, a student with ADD to be on medication such as Ritalin as part of a readmission plan following a suspension or expulsion. The

**Need to Know...continued on page 11**

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# CHAMPIONS FOR *children*

## The Only Way to Fly ...



Shari Prest

by **Shari Prest**  
Ark Associates

The evidence is consistent and compelling: if we want our public schools to truly soar in an increasingly complex and competitive marketplace, we need to be effective at engaging and

communicating with the broader community in a variety of ways. According to Public Agenda's executive vice president and *Education Insight's* director, Jean Johnson, "Over the past several years, Public Agenda's surveys have picked up strong indications that beneath the surface agreement on the need for schools to change, there are often gaps in understanding, miscommunication, confusion, and occasionally resentment. Majorities of superintendents and principals worry, for example, that some reforms are not practical 'in real life.' Teachers often believe that they are being left out of the loop when it comes to school decision-making. Perhaps most important, schools simply aren't going to be able to introduce and maintain changes of this magnitude without more involvement and buy-in from parents and the community at large."

As we fuel the engines of innovation for another year, it is crucial that everyone understands what is expected of him or her prior to takeoff. "Principals and school superintendents ought to perform a leadership role in deepening that community conversation," states Elliot W. Eisner ("The Kind of Schools We Need," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 2002).

**Parents**, for example, need to know that they are expected to ensure their children receive adequate encouragement, guidance, sleep, nutrition, exercise, attention and love on a daily basis. According to psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, whether children learn "does not depend primarily on what happens in school, but on the experiences, habits, values, and ideas they acquire from the

environment in which they live." High school graduates have spent only 10% of their lives, and none of their formative first years, in school. Author Robert Evans has found that the nature of parenting children receive, their economic status, and the media culture within which they live has a more significant impact than schooling for most children ("Reframing the Achievement Gap," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 2005). In their article, *Challenging the Assumptions About the Achievement Gap*, educators Al Ramirez and Dick Carpenter state, "While parent involvement takes many forms, numerous researchers have concluded that the most significant type is assisting children with school work at home" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, April 2005). Consider sending a specific "take-off" checklist or "launching" letter to parents. Have school/district communications focus on a different expectation for parents and commitment from staff each month of the year.

**Teachers** want to be genuinely recognized and utilized as valuable resources in both the classroom and in the dialogue about school change. Instead, perhaps as a result of AYP and a flurry of other testing initiatives, "Many administrators are enacting policies that place teachers in the role of compliant technicians," according to associate professor Beverly Falk ("Standards-Based Reforms: Problems and Possibilities," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April 2002). Authentic dialogues with teachers might include: engaging parents, strengthening school conference models, partnering with businesses, developing healthy student study habits, etc. The earlier district employees are involved in any change agenda, the more likely a successful outcome becomes. The role of teachers will become increasingly satisfying if they communicate comfortably and regularly with parents and enlist parents' support in achieving student and classroom objectives.

**School superintendents** are expected to provide ethical and informed leadership, to stay updated on best

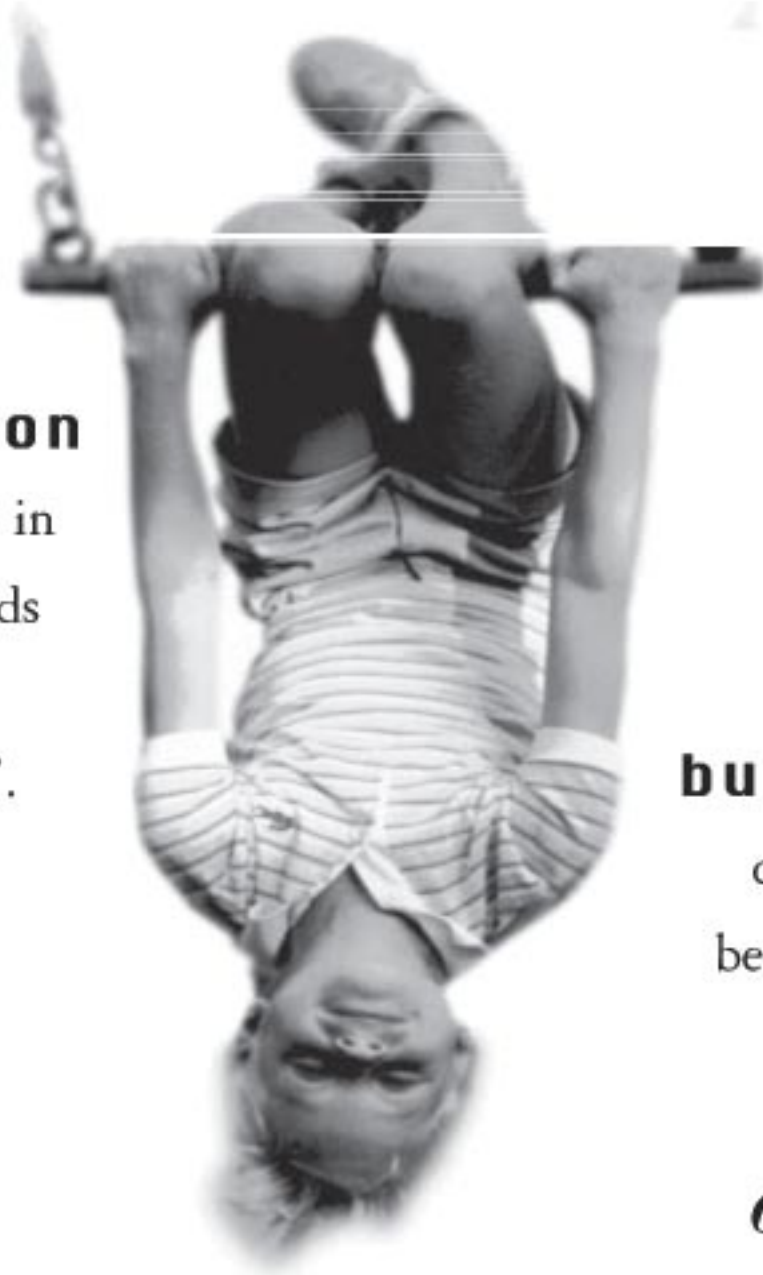
practices, to engage public support, and to monitor input and outcomes within the district and community.

**Educational leaders** must have the "vision to lead change, not follow it..." **The principal** must be a manager, an instructional leader, a visionary, a politician, a strategist, a community leader, and a personal counselor" (James Keefe and Robert B. Amenta, "Whatever Happened to the Model Schools Project?," *Phi Delta Kappan*, March, 2005). The tricky part is to communicate with students, staff, parents, taxpayers, and politicians how and when you are doing these things and the difference you are making. This requires a consistent and creative commitment to communications. Following is a list to use for measuring the effectiveness of your communication strategies and your readiness for flight:

1. Do your school/district stakeholders understand your roles and responsibilities?
2. Are you accessible to stakeholders?
3. Have you described and promoted parents' roles in supporting student success?
4. Does your district/school have a policy about the frequency and criteria for parent communications?
5. Is every district employee expected to return phone calls and/or written communications within 24 hours?
6. Do you regularly engage students, parents, teachers, community members, business representatives, and politicians in meaningful dialogue?
7. Does your change agenda include the authentic engagement of a variety of perspectives?
8. Do you emphasize to every school/district employee that they are a PR person for public education?

*If you have answered "yes" to all of these questions, you are ready for take-off. If you have answered "yes" to 5-7 of these questions, you are warming your engines for success. If you have answered "yes" to 4 or fewer of these questions, you should organize your team for a revised flight plan. •*

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## Effective Meeting Facilitation with Your Administrative Team or Your Board



Charlie Kyte

by **Charlie Kyte,**  
**MASA Executive Director**

We all live our lives going to seemingly endless rounds of meetings. At some of these meetings almost nothing is accomplished. At other meetings, you come away with a sense of accomplishment. Often, the difference between unproductive and productive meetings has to do

with the skills of the meeting convener.

Lead administrators have the responsibility of facilitating meetings of school boards and administrative teams. Your competence will be judged by meeting participants and their perceptions of the productivity of what happens in those settings.

There are several key steps to good meeting facilitation. They include planning for what the meeting is meant to accomplish, setting a clear expectation and targeting for the outcomes of the meeting, and using high-level skills in meeting facilitation.

The first step is to develop a good plan. Even when meetings come in relatively rapid succession, it is important to spend some time as a meeting facilitator thinking through what you expect to accomplish at the meeting, developing a key set of questions to pose to the group and establishing an agenda. Writing out a simple agenda will help you to think through the process of the meeting. It will also help participants at the meeting to have a clear idea of what should be accomplished. It is a good idea to pose the key question or questions on the agenda.

Another important piece of planning a meeting is to set up the meeting space. Using name cards for the table can help establish where you want people to sit. You should arrange the meeting in such a way that everyone has good eye contact with each other. Also, set the room in a favorable arrangement for the use of power point or other visual aids.

One mistake facilitators make is restarting the meeting for late arrivals. We have all been at meetings where introductions are made five or six times to accommodate a person arriving late. Set a standard that meetings will begin on time and introductions will be done once. If others are late, it becomes their responsibility to come up to speed. Take a short period of time at the beginning of the meeting for refreshments and communication. This allows time for people to gather and get ready.

A good facilitator will think through what they want to have happen in a meeting. If you want to generate ideas and then rank them, use the "nominal group process" technique. If it is best thinking that you want generated, you might use one of several

forms of "brainstorming." If there are hidden agendas you could use a technique in which each individual or group predicts what they think the others are thinking, and then use a process of posting these thoughts, without attribution, on a display board at the front of the room for further analysis.

Finally, a high quality meeting requires trust and willingness on the part of participants to share and be honest with each other. These issues should be addressed at the beginning of a meeting. A skilled facilitator will be sure the opinions and thoughts of each member of the group will be honored and accepted, even if not agreed to in the end. In this way, everyone will feel safe in sharing their ideas and often better ideas will emerge.

Persons working in lead roles need to be skilled in facilitating the meetings of the organization. If you can help meetings be productive, and you help others to leave feeling a sense of accomplishment, and you will be seen as a better leader than those that approach the meeting process casually and are not successful in conducting productive meetings. •



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Plan to attend the  
**MASA 2005 Fall Conference**  
October 2 - 4  
**Duluth Entertainment  
Convention Center**

*School leaders, though experts in education, have become positioned so that they are constantly reacting ... to government mandates, public opinion, influence of the business community, assertion by the media, etc. It is important for education leaders to strengthen their expert voices to set the education agenda.*

*(MASA Executive Development Committee, Spring 2005)*

### **General Sessions**

We will start off our conference by hearing from **William Taylor**, author of *Mavericks at Work - The New Business Agenda* and founder of Fast Company magazine. In this presentation, Bill explores the maverick companies, maverick leaders, and maverick initiatives that are defining the logic of business for the 21st century. The presentation is built around eight core insights - about strategy, leadership, creativity, and productivity - that explain why some companies thrive in hyper-competitive industries where most companies struggle merely to stay afloat. The insights are as surprising as they are refreshing, and they amount to a whole new point of view about the best way to compete and the right way to lead. Bill's work is particularly pertinent for our conference because a great challenge for education leaders is to move diverse groups of people from the status quo toward focusing on the climate/needs/culture inherent in a globalized, modern world. In other words, education needs to reform itself to

reflect the future, not the past.

**Jane Sigford**, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Wayzata Schools, will present her paper, "Reform and Politics a la Bill Gates, Thomas Friedman, Copernicus, Columbus, Cuban, and Us." Hear Jane's thoughts on why educational leaders don't know how to take charge of the change that is thrust upon us, why educators must engage in a conversation on the purpose of education, and how education must change--her proposal for reform. Don't miss this thought-provoking presentation!

OK, we've talked about why we need to set the agenda, and what that agenda should be, so now let's talk about how to communicate that agenda to diverse groups of people (who might think that they themselves should be setting the education agenda) and convince them to get on board with where we are going. Join communication expert **Susan Carnahan** as she helps us understand our political roles among various populations.

### **Also ...**

-- Golfers will enjoy the **MASA Foundation Golf Tournament Mixer** on Sunday at 12:30 pm. The tournament offers fun, prizes and an afternoon on beautiful Enger Park Golf Course. All conference participants are invited to play. The tournament benefits the work of the MASA Foundation, enhancing the leadership development of educational administrators.

-- Celebrate the service of our honored peers at the **Sunday Awards Banquet "Bow Tie Ball."** Service recognition and the prestigious Morris Bye Memorial Awards will be presented.

-- Members' partners are invited to the **Partners' Breakfast** on Monday morning at the DECC. All spouses and partners are encouraged to attend. This event is gender-friendly! We've planned an event that both men and women will enjoy.

-- The **Exhibit Fair** is a convenient way to visit with representatives of companies offering the latest products and services of value to school leaders.

-- An outstanding array of **Breakout Sessions** offer cutting-edge information on a variety of topics.

-- After a busy Monday, **relax at the DECC.** We will have an informal reception to wrap up the day and visit with friends.

-- Unwind and enjoy the attractions of **Duluth and Canal Park.** Whether it is a walk to enjoy the fall colors, a trip to the OMNIMAX, a great meal, or a little shopping, there are many choices for you and your family to enjoy when sessions adjourn for the day.

*Registration materials are available on the MASA web site [www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org).*

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# DISTRICT *Leadership*

## Directing Our VOICE for the Greater Good

by Don Draayer  
Retiree  
MASA Board of Directors  
Representative

*Editor's Note: MASA Board of Directors Retiree Representative Don Draayer recaps each board meeting for his fellow retired MASA members. The following is an excerpt of his last review. Thank you Don for your willingness to share your summary with the entire MASA membership!*

Charlie Kyte and President-elect Ted Blaesing invited Paul Houston, Executive Director of AASA to address this topic: **“DIRECTING OUR VOICE TO THE GREATER GOOD!”** Here are some of Paul’s points:

Dr. Houston noted that in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century “*universal access*” to education was the job given to public education. By mid-1980 that USA goal was generally achieved. **The new goal is “*universal success.*” Paul stated this new goal will require systemic changes within public education, including more individualized, personalized programs,** because all students do not all learn the same way and certainly do not come to school equally ready to learn. He shared research that shows children come to school with very different readiness to learn.

The number of words parents used with their 3 year old child within a one hour time frame varied dramatically by social economic conditions: **middle class (3000 words); laboring class (1300 words); poverty class (600 words).** Similarly, words of encouragement to children varied widely: **middle class (6 positives to 1 negative); laboring class (2 positives to 1 negative); and poverty class (1 positive to 2 negatives).** Paul concluded that the challenge of raising achievement is a societal issue, not

school alone.

Dr. Houston pointed out that the words we use to VOICE the education story make a huge difference in the receptivity of our audiences to our messages. Critics of public education use *carefully research words* that resonate with the general public and then use them effectively as talking points. Likewise (and recently), AASA and other national educational organizations have conducted surveys (research) to determine what words and phrases will best convey the public education message. For example, the phrase, “*Achievement Gap,*” is frequently used by educators in referencing differential achievements by subgroups specified by NCLB. Achievement Gap suggests that pupils with low achievement must be brought up to those exhibiting higher achievement.

**In effect, use of this phrase teaches people a falsehood, namely, that “good achievement” is a single (state or national) point for every student at a grade level.** The phrase further suggests that the job of public schools is to “train” pupils; that is, bring them all to one common point.

In contrast, Paul accented that “*education*” does just the opposite of “*training.*” Instead of bringing all students to one common point, which is the objective of “*training,*” **“education” promotes the development of gifts and talents of ALL students, which ultimately will yield greater differentiation, not less.** Paul further noted that the current model under NCLB uses coercion (public exposure, embarrassment, rating systems) to bring about compliance which may be successful in reaching lower target levels, but coercion is not an effective motivator to reach higher (creative) levels in teaching and learning.

Paul cited other examples of how our choice of words impacts our VOICE. Those advocating for less taxes use the phrase, “*Tax Relief,*” which in context implies taxes are a pain that must be relieved for individual taxpayers. Every time we educators repeat that exact phrase (or argue against it in that same context) we reinforce the negative message, no matter how we cover it with words.

**What the phrase “Tax Relief” signals is that individual good (keep money in your own pocket) trumps common community good (mutual benefit that strengthens social capital in a society).** Therefore, wise educational leaders in public education do not let the opposition set the playing field by accepting, VOICING, and repeating the phrase in public discourse. **Instead, speak about need for social capital that is necessary for a democratic society to survive.** One phrase in this regard that resonates well with all audiences is “*Public education is the cornerstone of democracy.*”

**Paul noted that NCLB is losing support among national politicians.** The conservative “right” is beginning to see that federalism in NCLB is trumping state’s rights. The liberal “left” is seeing internal inconsistencies in the NCLB law. Paul said “the Hill” in Washington DC ultimately has more power in these matters than “the Administration” because of the longevity of people in Congress.

According to Paul’s report from a recent national survey, what parents want of public education, are not (exclusively) test scores but these things: **happy kids** (who like going to school); **eager learners** (fully engaged in their own development); **well-behaved pupils** (respectful of self and others); **well-taught students** (well trained, caring educators), **efficiently-educated pupils** (no waste in

**Our VOICE...continued on page 11**

## Our VOICE ... Continued from Page 4

operations), and **frequent communications about kids** (progress in their learning and their programs). Parents generally are strongly supportive of their local schools, where their students attend, but are more critical of schools further away. The same is true for non-parents, only in spades.

**A major point by Dr. Houston was that superintendents must wake up to the fact that we are all politicians and are the VOICE for public education.** Every action taken or not taken and every word spoken or not spoken impacts the bottom line of teaching and learning. Furthermore, he said organizations like MASA either represent their membership's positions to the powers that be or represent powers that be to the membership. He concluded that public education today requires AASA and MASA leaders to give strong VOICE from members in the field to the powers that be, rather than the reverse.

**CLOSING STORY:** Paul observed in his recent travel to Antarctica that penguins often line up in a straight line on ice, sometimes 1000 in a row. Each penguin must leave the barren land and enter the water to find food; however, that same water harbors seals which eat penguins for their lunch.

The lead penguin in the long line, after due thought, plunges into the sea after which time each of the penguins, one at a time, follows suit. **Point:** Leadership is having the courage and commitment to be the first to take the plunge into waters that both feed us and eat us. •

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## Need to Know ... Continued from Page 4

statute clarifies that it may not. The law requires states to prohibit schools from requiring a student to receive medication as a condition of attending school, receiving a special education evaluation, or receiving special education services. Minnesota has adopted this standard.

As mentioned at the outset, the amendments discussed above became effective as of July 1. However, the MDE has yet to clearly state whether it is requiring or allowing full implementation of all or any of the new provisions. Almost certainly, the state special education statute will be revised during the next session to resolve the conflicts between the current state and federal laws. In addition, on June 10, the United States Department of Education issued draft regulations, which it hopes to finalize by the end of the year. Thus, the special education laws are, for the time being, somewhat "in flux" with more revisions on the way. Whoever said, "The only constant is change" surely had special education in mind. •

*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.*

## Did You Know?

The number of people over the age of 5 who speak a language other than English at home:

1990: 32 million

2000: 47 million

*from the Education Statistics Quarterly, vol 6, issue 3*



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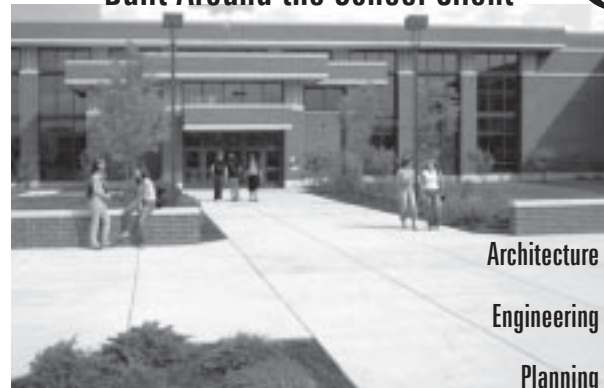
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# BUILDING YOUR *team*

## MASA Jobsite/Applicant Site: A Unique System

by Dennis Rens  
MASA Jobsite Manager

While it may seem early, it won't be long before districts will be looking ahead to 2006 and will be asked to make decisions about how best to recruit new staff members. One of the questions asked in that decision-making process may well be whether or not to subscribe to MASA's Online Jobsite/Applicant Site. In making that decision, consider that MASA's online site has many unique features.

### THE MASA JOBSITE CAN POST ALL SCHOOL JOBS

On some online sites you are only allowed to post instructional positions or only administrative positions. On MASA's site you can post ALL school jobs...instructional jobs, instructional support jobs (such as clerical, custodial, seasonal, cooks, paras, etc.), and administrative jobs.

### YOU CAN FIND CANDIDATES ON MASA'S SITE

Not only can you post your jobs on MASA's Jobsite, you can FIND CANDIDATES who are looking for your jobs on the companion Applicant Site. Each year over 600 teacher candidates place their profiles on the site, and you can screen them based on over 50 entered criteria.

### PERSONAL HELP IS AVAILABLE

When you subscribe to MASA's Jobsite, personal help is part of the deal. You not only get an instructional CD as part of the package, you also get the direct telephone number and email address of a consultant who will help you use the system to your greatest advantage and assist you with any problems you may encounter. Prompt, personal, expert service is a promised part of the system.

### A TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS

MASA's Jobsite has now been operational for seven years. During that time Minnesota schools have posted over 20,000 instructional jobs on the system, over 2400 support staff jobs and over 2200 administrative positions. More importantly, districts report great success in generating candidates from those postings. Annually nearly 200 Minnesota districts have subscribed to the site, and many now rely only on the Jobsite to advertise their positions.

The Applicant Site has been operating for five years, annually including the profiles of over 600 candidates. Each year the site is purged, and new, available candidates become a part of the system.

### MASA MARKETS THE SITE TO CANDIDATES

Each year the MASA staff markets the site to potential candidates. Typical marketing approaches include:

- Flyers are sent annually to all Education Minnesota School Building Representatives to post in their faculty rooms.
- Education Minnesota runs an ad in the "The Educator."
- Each year MASA runs ads for the Jobsite/Applicant Site over

a period of three months (April-June) in the following papers:

- 1) Star Tribune
- 2) Hmong Times
- 3) Insight News

- Annually college and university placement bureaus and schools of education in the upper Midwest are asked to post flyers and otherwise inform teacher candidates of the Jobsite.

Because of the marketing and because of the Jobsite's long, consistent record of success, it is WELL-KNOWN by candidates not just in Minnesota but throughout the country and, in truth, the world.

### SUSTAINABILITY

The MASA Jobsite and Applicant Site have proven their sustainability. They are not "here today, gone tomorrow." As long as Minnesota school districts see a need, MASA is committed to operating, maintaining, and improving the sites.

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## Alternative Compensation - Reflections from Someone Who Has Been Down that Road

by **Connie Hayes**  
**Retired Superintendent and**  
**Vice President, Springsted, Inc.**

In 2001, the LaCrescent-Hokah (L-H) School District traveled into the world of alternative teacher compensation. We learned some things from our successes and challenges. Here are some pretty simple rules for the road if you decide to take the journey now that the 2005 State Legislature has expanded the program.

### **Go Slow**

As I understand the new legislation, school districts do not need to race to the finish line. You have some time to plan. Use it. Start some brainstorming and planning outside of your regular negotiation sessions to build some common understandings of what you want to accomplish. We all know that negotiating can be difficult under the best of circumstances. Alternative compensation adds a whole new dimension to the process. All parties need some time to process how this new way of doing things will impact their worlds.

### **Listen carefully to each other**

If your plan may impact, change or eliminate the traditional salary schedule, be sensitive to the fact that this is a HUGE change for teachers. As teachers talk about this, try to listen for fears they have which they may not feel comfortable talking about. The "undiscussables" must become "discussables." Be genuine in your concern for them and ask the teachers to open up so your team can deal with these fears respectfully. This will build trust and enhance your capacity to sustain a new pay plan over time.

Teachers also need to understand that this is HUGE change for administrators. In efforts to build in practices of accountability, the relationship between the principal and the teacher will become different. Without intent on the part of principals, supervision can be perceived as gate keeping to better pay. Both parties need to be sensitive to this potential and listen for signs this might be creeping into the relationship. Recognize and communicate that this

adventure is something you are doing together, not to each other. An oversight committee made up of teachers, administrators and school board members can enhance opportunities to keep the lines of communication open.

### **Recognize that the plan will evolve over time**

Step into the plan one element at a time rather than taking the plunge. As both sides become more comfortable and confident, add new elements to the plan in subsequent contracts.

### **Focus on helping teachers, the District's most valuable resource, to become better**

Minimize the influence of anyone in the district that wants to use alternative compensation as a way to get rid of poor teachers. These people will poison your work. To the extent that you can promote a genuine environment of helping teachers to become better at what they do best, acceptance will grow over time. Getting the new legislative money is certainly an incentive, but if it is the only incentive to get involved, you will find less success.

### **Be persistent-don't give up at the first sign of trouble**

This is really hard work! With any new change, people tend to feel like they are falling into an abyss. They just don't understand what the change will mean for them personally. It can be very tempting to give up when the abyss seems like a big black hole. Things

might seem to go badly in the first contract. Both sides need to be prepared for this as it is a predictable phase of change. But it is also predictable that individuals will gradually climb out of the abyss as they sort out what the change means.

### **Give both sides a way out...but don't threaten each other with it when things become difficult**

Alternative compensation may be the wave of the future, but the research is still pretty thin. You can't fault those individuals that communicate, "Not in my lifetime!" with their body language when we promote this as the next best thing for education. We have all seen a lot of great innovations come and go in education, so be realistic about the fact that this is still in the experimental stage.

### **Relationship, Relationship, Relationship**

As you can see, the rules for the road are not technical in nature. They are more about how teachers and leaders work together. If you focus mostly on the technicalities and little on the relationships, you may crash on your journey. On the other hand, if you commit to relationship building along the way, the road you travel will be renewing and satisfying. Good luck! •

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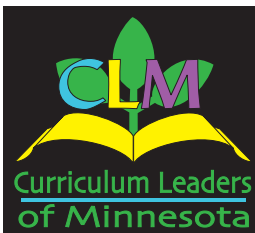
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- **The CLM Fall Conference:**

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# A Bittersweet IDEA

by Mary Ruprecht  
President-Elect, MASE and  
Director of Special Education  
Rum River Special Education Cooperative

The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA) was reauthorized on December 3, 2004. All provisions became effective on July 1, 2005. It includes flexibility in use of federal funds, a requirement for special educators to become “highly qualified” and several provisions to ease the Due Process pressures. From a District perspective, these changes fall on a spectrum of welcomed/sweet to burdensome/bitter.

The new law responded to growing concerns regarding the contentious and laborious process of providing special education by introducing changes related to evaluations, short-term objectives, team membership, etc. Unfortunately, here in Minnesota these improvements will not be implemented until there are changes in MN Statutes and Rules, which presently are more restrictive than the federal law. It is unlikely these changes will occur before 2007.

Although, full funding of IDEA was recommended by the Act, it was not authorized. Proposed appropriations from both the Administration and the House are approximately half of the recommended appropriation suggested in IDEA 04. Given the rapidly rising costs to districts for the provision of special education services, these proposed federal appropriations will result in a decrease in the percentage of the federal share of the costs of special education.

The fiscal news from IDEA is not all bad, however. There are several other fiscal provisions of IDEA 04 of specific interest to school administrators that do take effect immediately. In the past, in any fiscal year for which the Part B allocation received by the district exceeded the amount from the previous fiscal year, districts were allowed to use 20% of those funds to reduce local expenditures. IDEA 04 increases this percentage to 50. Districts are also allowed to use up to 15% of the allocated funds for school-wide early intervening services based on a formula set forth in the law. These funds may be used to develop and implement

coordinated, early intervening educational services and aids that can also benefit non-disabled children. However, if a district chooses to use federal Part B funds for early intervening services, the amount of funds expended for these programs counts toward the maximum amount of expenditures the district may reduce (50% rule dollars).

The alignment to NCLB “highly qualified” teacher requirements creates anxiety and extra work for many special educators. Under IDEA 04, special education teachers are required to meet the same HQ standards for core academic subjects as their regular education peers. Not only will special educators be required to hold a teaching license in special education, they must also demonstrate subject matter competence in each subject they teach. Since all teachers must be highly qualified by the end of the 2005/2006 academic year, many special education teachers will need to meet the HQ Standards by the end of this year. The new HQ requirements for special education teachers will affect districts whose elementary teachers are licensed in special education, but do not hold a regular education-teaching license. Secondary special education teachers who teach core academic subjects

either in a team teaching model or in a pull-out model (this includes reinforcement of previous learning from the regular education classroom) will also have to meet the HQ standards for each core subject they teach or reinforce. Separate site programs are also an area of concern, as many of these programs have teachers licensed only in special education and not in core academic areas. Special educators will require assistance from their districts in meeting the HQ requirements before the approaching deadline.

With each reauthorization of IDEA there are some provisions that are welcomed by districts and some provisions that create additional stress — bitter and sweet. This reauthorization is no different. The bitter taste of a long history of inadequate funding continues; however, there is some sweet news in the funding related to the flexibility provided under Part B. Relief in some areas of Due Process is offered (sweet), but deferred in Minnesota (bitter). Special educators must prove they are “highly qualified” (or become “highly qualified” quickly). Bittersweet? Welcome to the new IDEA. •

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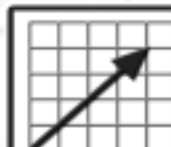
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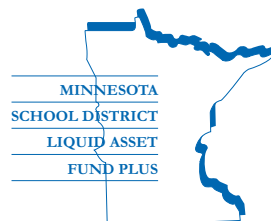
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# Reflections on Moving from the Principalship to the Superintendency

by Rod Thompson  
Superintendent, Greenway Public Schools

I can only imagine how the classified ad for my new position as Superintendent would have looked had it been blatantly honest. It would have looked something like this...

***Position Available – must be able to deal with the following school issues: resolve sixteen pending grievances and/or arbitration cases; settle a labor group dispute with a four year old outdated contract; resolve an "intent to strike issue" by a labor group; cut \$1.2 million dollars out of the district's budget; get out of SOD within two years without knowing what the legislature will do with school funding; and pass an additional levy to avoid cutting a million dollars in staff over the next two years. A law degree and a sense of humor a must!***

When I heard my fellow colleagues in the principalship joke about the journey some of our peers were taking to the "Dark Side," I used to envision them in a black robe with a Darth Vader helmet and light saber. Actually, little did I

know when I accepted my new position as Superintendent, both the helmet and light saber could become valuable tools in my administrative toolbox.

Most of us probably went into administration because we wanted to have a greater impact on positive teaching and learning at a building level. Becoming a superintendent has allowed me the opportunity to positively impact more than just building level issues. I realize more than ever that leadership is about the creation and maintenance of relationships. I have been fortunate enough to accomplish all of the items listed in the classified ad above and more thanks to supportive School Board members, staff, students, and families I work with on a daily basis.

In reflection, I have learned that superintendents need to be able to facilitate and affiliate. MASA has provided invaluable assistance to me and other new Superintendents during our transition year. Our professional organization and staff have presented each of us a venue for networking and problem solving with our new colleagues. Thanks to MASA staff, we do not have to feel like we are alone on the *Dark Side!* •



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# MASA Foundation Supports Professional Development

One of the primary goals of the MASA Foundation is to promote leadership development among Minnesota's school leaders. In support of that objective, the Foundation Board has created a permanent endowment. The endowment and its earnings will be invested in developing opportunities for MASA members to further their education in educational administration. Earnings will also be used to provide outstanding programs in professional development to new members and mid-career members.

The Foundation is working with each MASA component group to identify activities to fund that will be the most meaningful to their members. These might include activities for aspiring administrators, orientation for leaders in new positions, or training for seasoned administrators. Some possibilities include:

- Week-long comprehensive academies for superintendents, special education administrators, or other administrators, somewhat like a mini Bush experience.
- Support for administrators to attend national seminars or conventions, or perhaps an international experience.

The Foundation is able to move in this direction because it has spent a number of years raising the principal to begin the endowment. Funding activities have included personal gift campaigns, the Fall Foundation Golf Tournament, and the Spring Silent Auction. The Board is proud of its past efforts and is ready to move to the next level. In order to make that a reality, the Foundation needs the help of each and every MASA member.

The Foundation is asking current and retired MASA members to participate in a four-year pledge commitment of a minimum \$50 per year as a small way of giving back to their profession. If you haven't made a commitment already, please consider filling out the pledge form in this newsletter (at right) and sending it to MASA. The Foundation will ask donors to begin meeting their commitments this fall.

If each MASA member pledge their support, a minimum of \$200,000 new dollars for the endowment can easily be raised in the four-year period. But more importantly, the Foundation will use this demonstration of support to approach companies who do business with schools to ask them for their financial support for the endowment as well.

It is within our power to create an important source of funding to benefit the school administrators of MASA. Please consider carefully what the Foundation Board is trying to accomplish on your behalf and pledge a minimum of \$50 or more dollars a year for four years. •

*I would like to help!*

Here is my pledge for my annual contribution to the MASA Foundation Endowment Fund.

I will pledge:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50 Annually

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 100 Annually

\_\_\_\_\_ Another Amount Annually (please specify)

All gifts are tax-deductible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

Thank you for your pledge.

We will send you an invoice this fall, so you can honor your pledge in time to claim the tax deduction for the calendar year. The MASA Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization.

*Thank you!*

## Have you renewed your membership?

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

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# Calendar 2005 - 2006

September 22  
**Great Start Workshop III & Year 2 Cohort**  
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

September 22  
**BRIDGES Training**  
 Embassy Suites Hotel, St. Paul

September 23  
**Alliance for Student Achievement Education Summit**  
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

October 1  
**MASA Board of Directors Meeting**  
 2:30 - 4:30 pm  
 The Inn on Lake Superior, Duluth

October 2  
**Board Meeting Continues**  
 9:30 - 11:30 am

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

October 12 - 14  
**MASE Fall Leadership Conference**  
 Cragun's, Brainerd

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

November 11  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

November 16-18  
**Conference: The Assessment/Curriculum Connection**  
 Cragun's, Brainerd

November 24 - 25  
**Thanksgiving Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

December 7  
**MASA Executive Committee Meeting**  
 9 - 10:45 am  
**MASA Board of Directors Meeting**  
 11 am - 4 pm  
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

December 23 and 26  
**Winter Holidays**  
 MASA Offices Closed

## 2006 ...

January 2  
**Winter Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

January 11  
**Great Start Workshop IV & Year 2 Cohort**  
 Site TBD

January 12-13  
**MSBA Winter Convention**  
 Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis

February 1  
**MASA Executive Committee Meeting**  
 9 - 10:45 am  
**MASA Board of Directors Meeting**  
 11 am - 4 pm

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

February 10  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

February 23- 26  
**AASA National Convention**  
 San Diego, CA

March 15  
**Great Start Workshop V & Year 2 Cohort**  
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel

March 15  
**MASA Executive Committee Meeting**  
 9:30 - 11:30 am  
**MASA Board of Directors Meeting**  
 1 - 5:30 pm  
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel

March 16-17  
**MASA & MASE Spring Conference**  
 Sheraton Bloomington Hotel

April 14  
**Spring Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

May 12  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

May 29  
**Spring Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed



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