

## Are We Stuck in Today's Headlines or Writing Tomorrow's News?

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

Former St. Paul Superintendent Pat Harvey introduced me to *Unstuck*, a book that proclaims itself as "a tool for yourself, your team, and your world." Pat noted that teams and schools in her school district had used this terrific little book to rekindle their efforts to move the district and themselves toward a preferred future. I recently used *Unstuck* with my own district leadership team and found that while this book takes precious little time to read, it can forever serve as a guide for improvement.

One of the suggestions in the book is to write a news headline for the future. Imagine if you took a moon shot and it came true. How would that headline read?

The following is a paraphrasing of recent headlines in Minnesota newspapers:

- "Schools receive 4% increase in funding"
- "Funding for special education reduced"
- "Parents clamor to keep school open"
- "High school reform viewed as secret to improving academic performance"

- "Voter-approved levy dollars used to stave off additional budget cuts"

Are you sensing a theme? Each of these headlines is stuck in the current political paradigm of living within self imposed limits.

Now for a few headlines that as Minnesotans we could alternatively choose to write:

- "Public schools in Minnesota provide an extra year of education"
- "Minnesota students completing calculus in record numbers"
- "Every Minnesota youngster proficient in at least two languages"
- "All day kindergarten now provided for every student"

It's time to get unstuck and resist viewing our world of public education in the current context of limited resources of time and money. Consider how gradually adding three weeks to the school year could give each graduate of our high schools an extra full year of education. Consider how every Minnesota high school graduate interested in pursuing a degree in science or math could enter college with at least one year of calculus under their belt. Consider how requiring at least two languages of every learner would start the

journey to truly provide a world class education. Consider what potential could be tapped with all-day kindergarten being an option for every youngster.

I am not convinced that this is the correct list of future headlines, but I am convinced that as long as we only focus on what is good enough and continue to just tinker with our current ways of doing business, the result will be exactly as expected; achieving what is good enough and a lot more tinkering with our current status.

So what is the preferred headline of the future of public education? Are we taking a shot at the moon, a shot at the top of the IDS tower, or a shot at the top of our house? Let's challenge our thinking and the thinking of others who set education policy to create our preferred headline of the future – a headline that does not leave us stuck. •



Ted Blaesing

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MASA & MASE present . . .



2006 Spring Conference  
March 16-17

Sheraton Bloomington Hotel,  
Minneapolis South

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. Join your colleagues this spring and explore the importance of setting our own agenda ... and leading the change.

### Conference Highlights . . .

Keynote speaker **Jennifer James** is well known to audiences around the world for her innovative ideas. She works on an international level, helping people meet the challenges of today's transitions. Her speeches center on the dynamics of change and the development of thinking skills. Dr. James is a specialist in areas of cultural change, diversity and marketing intelligence. She has filmed two PBS specials — "Thinking in the Future Tense" and "A Workout for the Mind."

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

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

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

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

Twenty-four different **small group breakout sessions** will narrow the thematic focus to examine cutting edge topics (details inside):

- *Keynote Follow-Up with Jennifer James*
- *Overcoming Barriers to Successful Technology Implementation*
- *P-16 Partnership: Customizing an On-site Master's Program for an Individual School District.*
- *Providing Special Education in Alternative Programs*
- *Retirement Manager, a win/win/win for plan sponsors, participants and vendors.*
- *Balancing Rights with Safety for Students and Staff*
- *Pre-Engineering and the Ingenuity Frontier*
- *Legal Update: The Year in Review*
- *Partnering with your Staff in Formative Staff Assessment*
- *Planning to Win - Strategies on how to use long-range educational and facility planning to win referendums*
- *The Basics of School District Investing*
- *Working Effectively With the Mentally Ill,*
- *Impressions of Education in China*
- *Communicating Results: Helping Your Community Understand Complicated Issues*
- *Due Process Hearings Under IDEA 2004: How did this Mole Hill turn into a Mountain?*
- *Preparing for Retirement*
- *School Finance Election & the Paul Dorr Factor: Get Ready or Get Defeated*
- *The Role of Leadership in Decreasing Attrition in Special Education*
- *Addressing Nebulous Employee Medical Issues*
- *Facilitating Board Members Through Change*
- *Open Source Software for Project Management in K-12 Schools*
- *Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce in the Public Schools*
- *RTI: What Do All These Letters Mean & How Will They Help Children Learn*
- *STEM Challenges and Policy Implications for Education Leaders*

Friday morning keynote speaker **Harry Boyte** co-directs the Center for Democracy and Citizenship. The center focuses on developing practice-based theory about how to engage citizens in public life. Boyte was national coordinator for the New Citizenship, an effort to bridge the citizen-government gap that led to his presentation to President Bill Clinton on the future of democracy. More recently, Boyte was a senior adviser to the National Commission for Civic Renewal, headed by former Senator Sam Nunn and former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett.

At lunch on Friday, we will recognize the contributions of educator and community leader **Dr. John B. Davis**. Dr. Davis has inspired and mentored many Minnesota education leaders in his roles as superintendent of the Minneapolis Schools, president of Macalester College, and interim president of Mankato State University. He also provided leadership for the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Children's Theatre Company, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

As we go to press with this newsletter, we are also preparing for conference.

If you receive this before you leave, we hope to see you there!

## A Leader's Job at Mid-year: Wrap up the Year by Visioning for the Future

by Charlie Kyte,  
Executive Director, MASA

It may seem like the 2005-06 school year barely began as we raced through the fall and winter months. In reality, we are moving into the end game of the year and strategic leaders need to be looking forward as well.

Much of the work of school leaders is now focused on the 2006-07 school year. Along with planning budgets and staffing, leaders also should be looking at how their districts are positioned strategically to meet the continuing and emerging needs of their children.

Strategic leaders are always scanning the horizon. They are looking at the changing demographics in their schools and the changing (hopefully rising) expectations for student achievement. They are working

with their boards, communities and staff to reposition resources so that these emerging needs can be met. More and more of Minnesota's strategic leaders of education are recognizing that the challenge ahead of us is that of educational global competition. We need to prepare our students not just to compete domestically but also to compete with well-educated students from our global trading partners. Thus, we are seeing strategic leaders turn their school districts to serve students better in terms of math and science curriculums. History programs are turning slightly towards understanding the cultures of Asia and we are seeing a number of school districts introducing Mandarin Chinese language as a choice in both elementary and secondary curriculums.

As this school year comes to

an end, strategic leaders are already planning their summer retreats. Often these retreats are just for school boards, but other schools also plan retreats with administrators and teachers. Some bring parents, board members, teachers and administrators together in significant planning processes. No matter how your district's traditions play out, it is important that you plan time in either June or August to bring critical thinkers together in your district to plan for the future.

Thus, leaders of our public schools have their minds in two places during the spring. On one hand, you are busy wrapping up the current school year and bringing it to a healthy educational conclusion. At the same time, much of your effort is dedicated to scanning and planning the future. •



*Charlie Kyte*

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## A Few Tips for Transitioning to A New Job

by Charlie Kyte,  
Executive Director, MASA

About 20% (1 in 5) of Minnesota's school leaders are in new positions each year. Superintendents move to new districts, principals become superintendents, special education coordinators become directors, and so it goes. When the new year begins, a significant number of us will be in new settings with new responsibilities and working with new people.

Persons successful in their jobs pay attention to two things. The first is to provide excellent leadership for the specific tasks at hand. The second is to build the relationships that allow leadership to work. Relationships without action leadership, or action leadership without relationships,

tend to be unsuccessful. It is when the two come together that a leader will be able to move a system.

If you are moving to a new job, it is important to think strategically about who the stakeholders are with whom you will work. Who are your bosses? Who are your customers? Who affects the dynamics of the job? Once you know who your stakeholders are, you will want to begin a systemic process of inquiry. Ask key stakeholders what they see as major issues, and the directions that they hope for in their new leader.

This "scanning of the environment" can be formal or casual. MASA has a process on the MASA web site available to new superintendents coming into a

job. That process can be adapted to be used by superintendents and many other categories of school leaders moving into new positions.

Once a scan is completed, it is important to share with all of the stakeholder groups what you have discovered by interacting with them. This is an opportunity to validate that your assumptions are correct. It will also acknowledge to the stakeholder groups that you have listened and understand the needs of your system.

Finally, new leaders need to articulate their vision and goals. This should be done in such a way that everyone will know the goals. Leaders can then measure themselves against these goals as time moves forward. Identifying what you are trying to accomplish and measuring results will go a long way toward helping you to be successful. •

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## **We asked our members ...**

### **What are the three most important things that you do for community engagement?**

**Answer by Wendy Shannon**

**Superintendent, Byron Schools and MASA Treasurer**

We focus our attention in the following three areas: (1) We invite and encourage parent volunteers to become partners with educators in our school buildings. It has been more difficult to use parent volunteers at the high school level. (2) Each November we survey parents in our school district by building; elementary, middle and high school, to measure parent satisfaction and involvement. We have identified three other Minnesota school districts to compare results of similar key questions. (3) We conducted numerous bond referendum information sessions facilitated by community leaders who served as co-chairs or board members. Each board member articulated why they were personally going to support the referendum and the benefits to our students and community.

**Answer by Roger Worner**

**Superintendent, Centennial Schools**

From my vantage point, community engagement must be broadly-based, authentic, and consistent. I enjoy writing newspaper columns, attending Senior Citizen or Retired Teachers' luncheon meetings, conversing with Early Childhood/Family Education parents, and visiting with small business owners/patrons—all of whom have limited direct contact with the school district—to let them know their tax dollars are supporting a quality enterprise. In a similar fashion, I believe in annually "showcasing" each of our district and building administrators at a cable-cast School Board meeting so the public can better understand the quality of their school leaders and the complex jobs they perform. I believe a public confident of its leaders is supportive of the organization they lead.

**Answer by Jim Hess**

**Superintendent, Bemidji Area Schools**

Being relatively new to the Bemidji area, I consider community engagement essential to my eventual success or failure as Superintendent and clearly linked to our success as a school system. Here are three important opportunities we see to enhance community engagement: effective communications, high visibility/accessibility, and service-oriented leadership. Let me explain.

Effective communication helps set the stage for constructive community engagement. As school leaders we can't assume people in the community know the story, consequently we use every means to articulate two powerful messages; our schools are safe and students receive a world-class education in the Bemidji Area Schools. Annual Systems Accountability Reports, newsletters, newspaper articles, frequent radio interviews, televising School Board meetings and announcements, and web pages often viewed as mundane are treated as golden opportunities to share stories of success and invite public comment or participation. When accurate, positive school information is widely available, we help fashion community conversations and opinions.

**Three Most Important Things ... Continued on Page 24**

## We Want Excellence!

By Diane Lehse, Superintendent  
Clearbrook-Gonvick Schools

"Do we just want OK?" asked the teacher as he turned back to the class while writing on the board. "No. We want excellence!" responded the room full of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in unison.

Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a pre-engineering program for middle-level and high school students, is being implemented this year at Clearbrook-Gonvick School with great enthusiasm on the part of students, teachers, parents, administration and the entire community. Students are bussed into our rural northern Minnesota school and many of them head straight for the lab to finish their projects or ask questions of their teachers. These are classes where students groan when the bell rings and they have to leave.

At a recent Advisory Committee meeting, a representative from nearby Bemidji State University said, "Young people will come in with skills that University people haven't seen yet...It's going to shiver the timbers of people in higher education." A representative from TEAM Industries commented that PLTW is an example of "warped learning" which is changing delivery methods and student learning so quickly that (perhaps) the adults will have a difficult time catching up.

Students are working on design in the Introduction to Engineering class, and two of them are developing a platform for snowmobiles. They are talking about getting a patent and, like business entrepreneurs, are already discussing upgrades.

How did this all start? A year ago, Northwest Technical College invited area superintendents to a breakfast meeting to discuss ways to collaborate. A speaker talked about Project Lead the Way and opportunities for high school students to become involved in pre-engineering classes. At a later meeting, the Kern Family Foundation was mentioned as a possible funding source. I went back to school excited about the possibilities, talked to the Student Council, met with our two math teachers, talked with the School Board and pursued the grant. In the process, an Advisory Committee was formed with representatives from business, higher education, School Board members, engineers and parents. Support was high and TEAM Industries said they would do whatever they could to advance the project. The grant was submitted and our school was awarded \$53,000 from the Kern Family Foundation. Additional funds were received from TEAM Industries (\$10,000) and Garden Valley Telephone (\$5000).

We were ready to go! Our math teachers attended summer "boot camps" at the University of Wisconsin and Purdue. We purchased high power computers and set up a new lab. Fall came. All of our middle level students are taking Gateway to Technology classes, which include four units: Design and Modeling, The Magic of Electronics, the Science of Technology and Automation and Robotics. Courses are 9-weeks long and are a "required elective" for a semester. High school students are taking Introduction to Engineering in a multi-grade classroom.

Additional training for the teacher for next year's high school class, Principles of Engineering, will occur at the University of Minnesota this summer. 100% of students who took this year's class want to take POE next year. Two graduating seniors are planning to attend the University of Wisconsin engineering program next fall. Students are enthused about learning and are seeing that math, science, and language arts are integrated in project-based learning. The engineering journal is a necessity and individual portfolios are high quality.

PLTW is a catalyst and is changing the way education is delivered at Clearbrook-Gonvick. Next year we are going to establish a Middle Level Team with common prep, advisors, scheduled conferences and multi-disciplinary approaches.

Engaged students are at the core of PLTW. A high school PLTW student who is working as a teaching assistant for the middle level classes commented: "I think they're having a lot of fun with it. Projects are getting more difficult and more technical. It's something I would have liked to have had when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade!"

In cooperation with Bemidji State University, we are looking at establishing an elementary after-school Pre-Engineering exploratory program next fall, with BSU students earning credits for an internship and our high school students serving as mentors. We have started down a path that will bring success for our students. Students want excellence and we do too. OK is not good enough! •

# What is Your Political Quotient?

**By Jane Sigford**  
**Executive Director of**  
**Curriculum & Instruction,**  
**Wayzata Schools**

Depending on one's viewpoint, educational leaders have been described as managers, instructional leaders, servant leaders, or as Collins' Level 5 leaders, to name a few. However, except for superintendents who think about school boards, labor negotiations, and chambers of commerce, we spend little time talking about, or thinking of, our role as political leaders. As politicians become "education presidents" and "education governors" and private citizens, such as Bill Gates, set criteria for high school reform, it is incumbent on all educators, not just superintendents, to be more political.

Our current structure of adversarial politics based on a scarcity model has traditionally been seen more as a male domain. However, women too must become engaged.

What does being political mean? Take the following short quiz to get an idea of the broader scope.

## POLITICAL QUOTIENT

- | Yes | No  |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| ___ | ___ | 1. Contributed time or money to the party of your choice in the last 2 years?                                       |
| ___ | ___ | 2. Know the voting records and political viewpoints of my national legislators, particularly on educational issues? |
| ___ | ___ | 3. Know the voting records and political viewpoints, particularly about education, of my local legislators?         |

- | Yes | No  |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| ___ | ___ | 4. Network with my peers?   |
| ___ | ___ | 5. Stay current about legislative issues at the local and national levels?  |
| ___ | ___ | 6. Stay current about special education legislation?  |
| ___ | ___ | 7. Keep constituent groups, such as those who report to me, informed about current topics and agendas?                                  |
| ___ | ___ | 8. Testified or observed at a legislative hearing?  |
| ___ | ___ | 9. Attend local meeting of Rotary, or Chamber of Commerce on a regular basis?   |
| ___ | ___ | 10. Belong to a professional organization geared to my area of work or licensure, such as principals' or superintendents' organization? |
| ___ | ___ | 11. Attend local and/or national conferences sponsored by my professional group, such as national superintendents' conferences?         |
| ___ | ___ | 12. Vote in every election, including school board?   |

- | Yes | No  |  |
|-----|-----|--|
| ___ | ___ | 13. Read a book/article in the last 6 months written by someone who does not share my political opinion?   |
| ___ | ___ | 14. Stay current on NCLB legislation?  |
| ___ | ___ | 15. Have political discussions with my peers?  |
| ___ | ___ | 16. See myself as political (with a small "p")?  |
| ___ | ___ | 17. Have called or written (email doesn't count) a legislator, local or national, in the last three years? |
| ___ | ___ | 18. Have spoken out against issues that are harmful to our students?                                       |
| ___ | ___ | 19. Read at least one educational periodical, <i>Ed Week</i> , etc. per month.                             |
| ___ | ___ | 20. Have formulated my philosophy about the role of a free, public, and comprehensive education?           |

## SCORE

Yes Answers X 100 = PQ 20 (Total)

The perfect PQ would be 200. What are you? •




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Shari Prest

**By Shari Prest,  
Ark Associates**

Educational leaders, as the authors of the future of public schools, need to tell the tale of teaching and learning in Minnesota. The story is a compelling one

about change, challenges, accomplishments and potential. It is, as Charles Dickens once wrote, about “the best of times and it is the worst of times.”

**It is the best of times.**

- Public school students perform in math as well as or significantly better than comparable students in private schools, according to the largest government study ever done on the topic. The study included 340,000 students in regular public, charter and private schools. *According to the New York Times, researchers compare math scores, not reading scores, because math is considered a clearer measure of a school's overall effectiveness.*
- Students in Minnesota score higher than students anywhere else in the country on ACT tests.
- “Public schools excel in exceedingly difficult areas, such as accelerated academics, the integration of immigrant populations and the education of students with special needs...In fact, contrary to widespread belief, most ‘normal’ kids from stable backgrounds thrive there.”<sup>1</sup>

- Nationally, far more public school students take Advanced Placement (AP) classes and exams than private school students do.<sup>1</sup>
- Teachers in Minnesota are more likely to teach the core subjects for which they are trained than teachers in any other state.<sup>2</sup>

In short, Minnesota public schools lead the nation in education performance.

**It is the worst of times.**

- Despite all of the accomplishments of public education in Minnesota, “there’s a war raging against our public schools.” The perception that our schools are not meeting the needs of learners and society is promulgated by those “who either have an ideological ax to grind or who simply don’t have an accurate measure of the public schools’ singular accomplishments.”<sup>2</sup>
- Despite a preponderance of research and data that demonstrates public school students outperform their comparable private and charter-school peers, demagoguery continues to influence public perceptions and political behaviors in favor of private alternatives.
- The persistent introduction of politically-based education initiatives, such as the 70% revenue allocation proposal, distracts human and financial resources from the best practices and continual improvement of teaching and learning.

- Even though Minnesota ranks at or near the top nationally in most education quality indicators, our administration expenditures are near the bottom, with only Utah and Mississippi investing less than Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>
- Minnesota ranks 25th on the spending index, which reflects both the percentage of students in districts spending at or above the national average and how far the rest are below that average.<sup>2</sup>
- Despite disappointing charter school performance, Minnesota has more charter schools than all but eight states.<sup>2</sup>
- Only the District of Columbia and Florida had a smaller increase in education spending per student between 2001 and 2002 (most recent figures).<sup>2</sup>

The pundits are correct when they say we can no longer sit upon the laurels of the success that public education in Minnesota has enjoyed in the past. We must anticipate the future and support the changes required to conquer it. “Our historic investment in public education has paid off, handsomely, in stellar academic achievement, social integration, and economic success. Turning our back on that tradition would be a colossal blunder.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *What Matters to Us, Public Education, MPLS. ST.PAUL Magazine, January 2006*

<sup>2</sup> *No Small Change, Targeting Money Toward Student Performance, Quality Counts, 2005*

<sup>3</sup> *Education Vital Signs, American School Board Journal, 2006*



## The Whole Person Approach for Developing Top People – A Lesson for All Educators

By Robb Hiller  
President,  
Performance SolutionsMN, Inc.

### What Drives Top Talent In Schools?

Your car is racing but it can't compete on the track. Like a car with old tires, hiring or developing highly energetic educators with the wrong skills, values and behaviors provide no traction to move forward.

You've been there: you read resumes and interview great candidates for a job. You sense enormous potential and possibility with each new hire. I think this person will be a great teacher or principal. When you make the final decision, you have a sense of hope that "now we have the right person who can make things happen." You feel euphoric!

But then, six to nine months later things aren't going well. You then devote a mountain of time and resources to help this person achieve average or below average performance. You spend hours trying to figure out why and how to fix the issue, you coach and train to no avail. They are a nice person, but a below average performer. The school board finally gets involved and voila, you have some explaining to do.

**What do you do?** Letting the person go costs the school district tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Letting them stay costs more. The emotional cost is high but you finally make the change. Ugg!

The problem may be in your process for hiring and developing

people. First, you have the wrong tire on the car to move ahead at the speed you need. Second, you need to look under the hood to really see what gifts and talent the people possess. This is especially difficult in hiring top teachers and administrative people.

Here's a set of four ways to assess your new "tires," an online, scientific process to hire and manage that has been thoroughly road-tested and will stand up to the potholes and curves you will encounter.

**Tire #1: What is their raw talent?** What raw talent are you looking for in the job? Have you benchmarked the job for the talent required? Is it important to have problem solving ability, self-management, high personal accountability, persuasion, empathy, can they teach and how do they handle stress? This is where most problems occur in hiring or managing performance. *It is not being able to identify what is the "raw" talent needed. So first, have your stakeholders in the job write out a list of three to five key outcomes required for superior performance that can be measured and look at what is needed.*

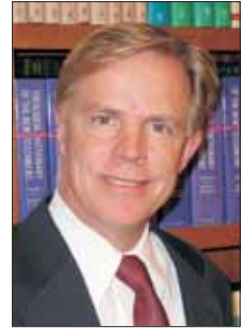
**Tire #2: Behavioral Style:** We're talking about the person's style of behavior here - the how.

Behaviors come in four styles:

- Directing-this type will likely just tell you to do it. It is all about the challenge and competition and getting results.
- Influencing-this type will use talking and gestures in their efforts to win the kids' favor.
- Steady-this type will demonstrate logic, patience

and a soft way of sharing information. This style is concerned with the pace and consistency.

- Compliant-this type will work to convince you with facts and data. They think about following policies and procedures and want to stick to the book. They don't want to make mistakes.



Robb Hiller

Which style is the most effective for the job and the position you seek to fill? Or what combination is needed? This is literally the million-dollar question. If you don't have tools to accurately predict, give them a real situation and ask them how they would come to a resolution. The key is to listen to how they think. For current employees, just watch!

**Tire #3: Motivating Attitudes and Values-The Why:** What are the two major buckets that truly motivate this person and what does the job require? Motivating Attitudes (values) are the internal rewards and forces-the **why** behind the things people do. Do you have a way of objectively knowing? If you don't have the tools to do so, ask them targeted behavioral based interview questions like, "what parts of your past jobs were the most rewarding and why?" But an assessment that measures values is the best way.

**Tire #4: Experience and Technical Skills:** Your car can't win on only three wheels, so it is vital to assess technical skills and teaching or educational experience, too. For many schools this is most of what they test and technical skills becomes the only tire. They have a unicycle, not a race car!

**The Whole Person...Continued on Page 20**

## Release of Private Data – Traps and Tips for School Districts



Marie C. Skinner

By Marie C. Skinner  
Attorney, Kennedy & Graven,  
Chartered

Release of private data without the consent of the data subject is an issue which confronts school districts on a very regular basis.

These questions arise often and involve both educational data and personnel data. Of course, a school district may release any private data with the written informed consent of the data subject. Informed consent to release education and personnel records has several components. It must be:

- In writing
- In plain language
- Specific as to records to be disclosed
- Specific as to purpose for the disclosure
- Identity of party to whom disclosed
- Dated
- If no time period specified, expires in one year

While no school district official would release private data to strangers, there is a temptation toward unauthorized release to law enforcement and court agencies, step-parents and grandparents. These types of disclosures can cause problems in the form of angry employees, angry parents, financial penalties and possibly even criminal consequences.

### *Potential Traps and Tips to Avoid Them:*

- A grandparent comes to parent/teacher conferences. She tells the teacher her daughter won't share information about how her grandson is doing at school and adds "I pay all the bills, feed and clothe them both, so I'm entitled to his grades."

Without a parent's or guardian's written consent, the data cannot be disclosed to grandma.

- A student and/or former student has been charged with a violent crime. A police detective shows up at school with a subpoena on behalf of the county attorney demanding release of all school records.

A subpoena is not a court order. To obtain the data without the data subject's consent, the detective must give you an order signed by a judge. Even then, you must notify the data subject or parents prior to release of the data.

- Same situation as above and the law enforcement official threatens you with contempt of court.

Check the dates on the subpoena and contact your school district's legal counsel. If the court hearing is imminent (i.e., in a matter of hours), gather the data, take it with you to the hearing, ask the judge for an order and time to notify parents as required by federal law.

- Your school/police liaison officer requests disciplinary and attendance data on a number of students the local

police department suspects of criminal activity.

You may not release the information. The officer is not acting on behalf of or at the request of the School District.

**NOTE:** The answer in this situation is different if the School District reported a crime. In that case, there is authority for providing IEP data and discipline records.

- A news media representative is seeking information about an employee suspended pending an investigation into allegations of misconduct. The police are also investigating. The reporter wants to know what the allegations involve. The reporter already has obtained the information from other sources and only wants the School District to verify the information. May you comment?

Until the investigation is complete, you may only disclose that complaints exist, the School District is investigating or any other information related to status. The School District may **NOT** release any data with respect to the substance of the complaint or reason for charges. Always remember that the news media has no greater right of access to private data than that of any other member of the public. A School District may not even confirm or deny information already known to others if to do so would amount to release of private information. •

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## Why is MASA Proposing to Lengthen the School Year?

by Charlie Kyte,  
Executive Director, MASA

The proposal to lengthen the school year in Minnesota has created quite a stir among teachers, students, parents and the media. MASA, by bringing this issue forward, is seen as an association of visionary leaders or an organization upsetting a comfortable status quo.

We continue to hear the push from our society and business leaders that our education system must do a better and more thorough job of educating our children. Yet, many of the forces of our society have taken valuable learning time away from students and schools over the past several years. With the onset of state testing, we lost three or four days of the school year. As parents become more casual about taking vacation time, more students are missing classes. As our activity programs have become more fully developed, students are gone from school for various sports and music events. In each case, teachers are struggling to complete the syllabuses for their classes and to meet the learning needs of all students.

Yet, there is an expectation that we produce more students with an excellent education background and that students do not come out of our schools unsuccessful in literacy.

To do a significantly better job requires more time on task.

A longer school year, and a longer work year for teachers, also necessitates more of a balanced year round calendar as opposed to the traditional agricultural based calendar that we presently utilize for most of our schools. This does not mean that the entire summer goes away, but the summer break would be shorter and a couple of other breaks would be built into the year. However, students would not have the long layoff of the summer months which results in so much learning regression, especially for students struggling to learn.

MASA has proposed that the school year be lengthened from the present 172-174 day length to 200 days per year. MASA has further proposed that the teacher work year, which is now 185 days, be lengthened to 230 days. The proposal suggests the phase in of five years and an acknowledgment that the increased cost of paying the staff will be about \$200 million for each year of this phase in process.

If the state of Minnesota steps up to the challenge of educating students to a higher level, it is important to have this discussion. It is not fair to educators or children to expect significantly higher levels of education without a greater investment of time and commitment. MASA's proposal will help bring focus to this issue. •

## Legislative Session Underway

by Charlie Kyte,  
Executive Director, MASA

We are now well into the short 2006 Legislation Session. We began on March 1 and anticipate the adjournment just prior to the end of May. MASA has several pieces of legislation that will be heard by the education committees.

**All Day/Everyday Kindergarten:** MASA is proposing a methodology to phase in all day/every day kindergarten over several years. We are asking the legislature to commit to an investment of \$50 million each year over several years until the kindergarten program is fully funded. Students with the highest level of need will be those first funded under this arrangement.

**Simplifying Minnesota's Special Education statutes and rules:** MASA has drafted legislation, in partnership with MASE, to sunset many of Minnesota's rules, regulations and statutes as they pertain to special education. Our organization will continue to support the Minnesota statutes that provide special education services to children of ages 0 – 3. We also support the 2005 Legislation regarding behavior intervention. However, we are asking all other provisions of Minnesota law to sunset as of 2007.

**Increase education funding:** One special education area of obvious need is to increase the general formula for special education and the excess cost formula. The cost of special education is going up at 4% a year and the special education funding formulas have been frozen. We will continue to see greater and greater prorations of special education funding unless

these appropriations are set to meet the actual cost of special education. All school districts would benefit by having a full appropriation of funding for special education.

MASA has also drafted a Bill to increase the general Foundation Formula by 1% additionally in each of the next two years using funds from the current biennium.

**Extend the lengths of the student and teacher school year:** If Minnesota is serious about raising the level of achievement significantly for students, it is going to take more time to do so. At present, Minnesota has one of the shortest learning years in the nation and the learning year is significantly shorter than many of our global competitors. Further, we are expecting teachers to become more analytical, looking at data and strategizing on how to meet the learning needs of every child. Yet, we are expecting them to do this with only two to four available days for professional development during the school year. Thus, MASA is proposing a significant increase in the length of the teacher work year so that teachers have the time necessary to prepare and develop outstanding educational processes for their children. The proposal for the teacher year brings teachers, like other knowledge workers in our society, up to a 230-day work year. Any change in the length of the work year and the students attendance year, need to be accompanied by the funding necessary to compensate those working within the public schools to do these jobs.

Finally, MASA is prepared to react to many of the other legislative proposals that will be coming forward during the session. Some of these will have merit and many others will cause us concern. •



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## Tom Westerhaus is MASA President-Elect Nominee



Tom Westerhaus

Dr. Tom Westerhaus has been nominated for MASA President-Elect for 2006-07. He has been superintendent for the Prior Lake-Savage Schools since 2002. He is a passionate and visionary educator who is especially

noted for his ability to communicate effectively with all members of the community, building strong connections with the school district. During his tenure, Prior Lake-Savage has been recognized for its high quality programs aimed at improving student learning.

Another significant aspect of Dr. Westerhaus' commitment to excellence in education is the value he places on professional development for teachers, other educational leaders, and other district staff. He inspires their continued learning and development by his own example. His staff feel that he epitomizes the saying "Those that stop being better, stop being good." They emphasize that his perseverance, dedication and expertise, make their system the fine one it is today.

He comments on serving MASA: "I pledge my determination to actively support Minnesota's educational leaders, to follow the proactive direction the organization has taken under the leadership of our executive director, and to stretch us to become even stronger advocates for public education and the children of Minnesota."

### *A Message from Tom Westerhaus ...*

The role of educational leader in this age of pressure has been characterized as trying to ride the backs of two dolphins at the same time. One dolphin represents changing expectations of the larger society, while the other represents the sensitive and difficult issues of performance of the school system. The real challenge in riding both dolphins is to bring discordant voices and conflicting viewpoints together for the best interests of the students and the community.

I have recognized and accepted this challenge of dolphin-riding over the years in my role as school district leader and am now anxious to expand my leadership and serve MASA and its members as President-Elect. The opportunity to give back to MASA, the organization that has supported me in my personal growth as a leader and that has itself grown into the premier educational voice of education in the State of Minnesota, is an awesome and exciting challenge.

In serving you as President-Elect, I look forward to the opportunity of finding new ways to attract, retain, support, value and acknowledge MASA leaders across the state. I am anxious to strengthen partnerships within and beyond the educational community. I will work to expand professional development opportunities for you as MASA members. And I will speak passionately on behalf of children and stretch us to become even stronger advocates for public education in Minnesota.

There is no better time to be a part of the educational process in Minnesota, and I look forward to leading MASA by serving its members in these exciting times! •

Dr. Westerhaus holds a doctoral degree from the University of St. Thomas, a sixth year degree from St. Cloud State University, a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, and a bachelor's degree from St. John's University. Before becoming Superintendent for the Prior Lake-Savage Schools, he was Superintendent of Schools for the ROCORI Schools in Cold Spring, Minnesota; Adjunct Professor for St. Cloud State University;

Educational Consultant for Harcourt Brace Publishers; Superintendent of Schools, in Arcadia, Wisconsin; Principal for the ROCORI Schools; Principal for the St. John's Laboratory Schools; Principal for the St. Thomas School, Madison, South Dakota; Teacher for the Stillwater Schools; and Teacher for the St. John's Laboratory School. •

# Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Leadership Program Named for Trustee Emeritus Jim Luoma

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has named its leadership development program in honor of Jim Luoma, a trustee emeritus of the system's board.

"Jim Luoma is the kind of visionary leader who truly made a difference during the formative years of this system," said Chancellor James H. McCormick. "His idea - to create a leadership program so the system can grow its talented faculty and staff - is now paying off. I'm delighted that we can recognize his outstanding contributions by establishing the Luoma Leadership Academy."

Luoma served as a trustee of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities from 1999 to 2004. During that time, he consistently supported professional and educational development opportunities for faculty and staff. He served as board chair and vice chair, and as chair of the Educational Policy Committee.

Luoma spent his entire professional life in education, first as a teacher for the South Washington County School District, then as a principal in that district, and, finally, as superintendent for the Grand Rapids

public schools.

Luoma earned his doctorate in education from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, a master's degree from Northern State College in Aberdeen, S.D., and a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota, Duluth. He and his wife, Carol, live in Cohasset, Minn.

William Tschida, the system's vice chancellor for human resources, said, "There is no doubt that the Luoma Leadership Academy will leave its mark for decades to come. I personally want to thank Jim Luoma for his steadfast support in developing the system's talented employees."

Begun in November 2004, the leadership program has had 104 faculty and staff participants. The first cohort completed its last session in November 2005. The second cohort will complete the program in August 2006. A third cohort starts in June 2006.

The leadership program is system wide

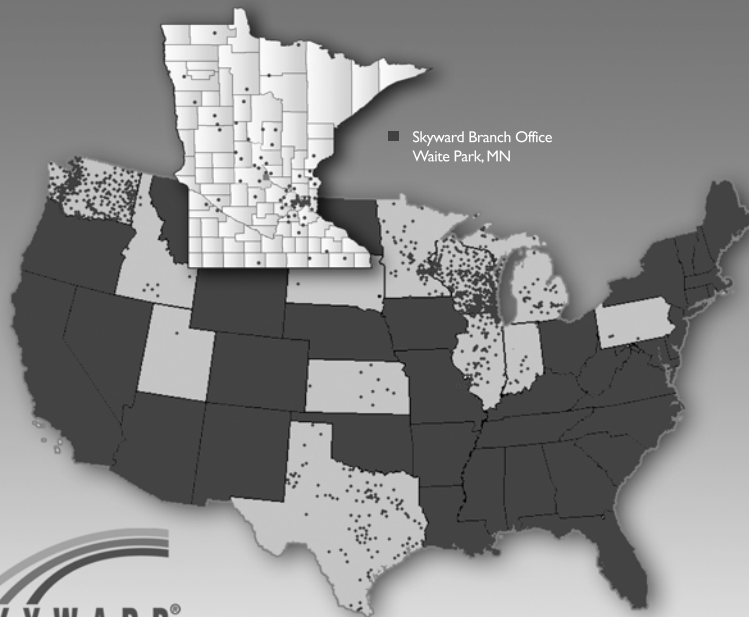
for mid-level faculty or staff members who aspire to higher leadership positions. The academy helps participants develop leadership skills, gain an appreciation of different perspectives in the system and create a network of colleagues committed to transformational leadership.

The Office of the Chancellor contracts with The Chair Academy in Mesa, AZ to deliver the program. The curriculum has been proven and refined for more than 15 years nationally. Facilitators are current and former academic leaders in higher education.

For more details, see: [www.hr.mnscu.edu/staffDevelopment/welcome.html](http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/staffDevelopment/welcome.html) and click on Luoma Leadership Academy. •

*The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system comprises 32 state universities, community colleges, technical colleges and combined community and technical colleges located on 53 campuses across the state. The system serves approximately 240,000 students annually in credit-based courses and another 130,000 in non-credit courses.*

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## I Am Humbled

By Gary Prest,  
Superintendent, Bloomington Schools and  
2006 MN Superintendent of the Year

We have all heard it many times. Someone receives an honor and after reflection says quietly, "I am humbled." Well, it is true.

After Charlie Kyte called to inform me that I had been named the 2006 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year, I responded, "I am humbled." In that instant I recognized what those who had gone before knew well. While we appreciate the kind words and generous spirit of which such honors are made, we didn't do anything that singularly merits the award. For Superintendents, nothing is done by oneself. Even in moments when we think we alone finalized the decision or made the call, we know that others had influence and guidance that helped us hone our thinking, consider the options, understand the nuances. So those who have stood with me deserve to share the honor.

More than that, at each gathering of Superintendents, I

marvel at the talent, the intellects and the courage displayed by my colleagues. At times, I wonder if I would stand up in the way one of you has during a particular time of adversity, or would I engage another with the same respect in the face of disrespect, or would I find the elegant words to state a position of importance for learners, or would I have the wisdom to keep quiet in one fight and choose a battle with a nobler purpose. So those who model the best in the profession deserve to share the honor.

Our friend Ben Kanninen, 2005 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year, told me to expect surprises every day. He was right. I have heard from friends and colleagues from recent times and from the distant past. Each email, letter, card, and call has brought to mind reminders of how each person has shaped and colored who I am. So those who have influenced me deserve to share the honor.

So to each of you, congratulations! Because of you, someone was named "Minnesota Superintendent of the Year" and to each of you, thank you. •



2006 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year, Gary Prest receiving his award from Minnesota Commissioner of Education, Alice Seagren on January 24, 2006.

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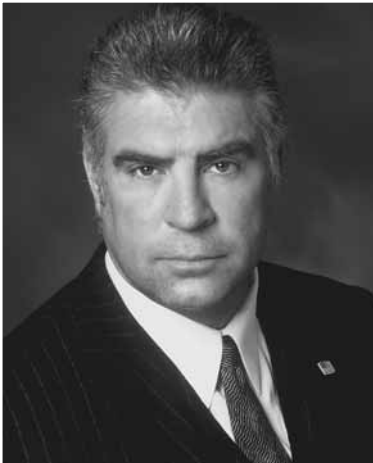
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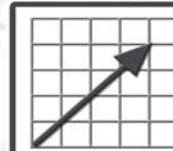
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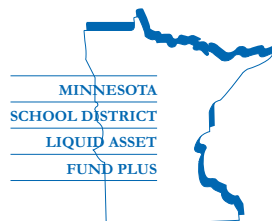


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## The Whole Person... Continued from Page 9

Several studies have confirmed that only 15 percent of a worker's long-term fit is based on technical skills and knowledge. The other 85 percent is based in people skills, talent and people knowledge. You've got to have the other three!

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*Robb Hiller is the President of Performance SolutionsMN Inc. He is nationally known in helping companies "get unstuck" in the areas of strategic planning, leadership and teamwork, benchmarking talent & helping put the "right person in the right job." He can be reached at 952-943-0747 or robb@performancesolutionsmn.com*

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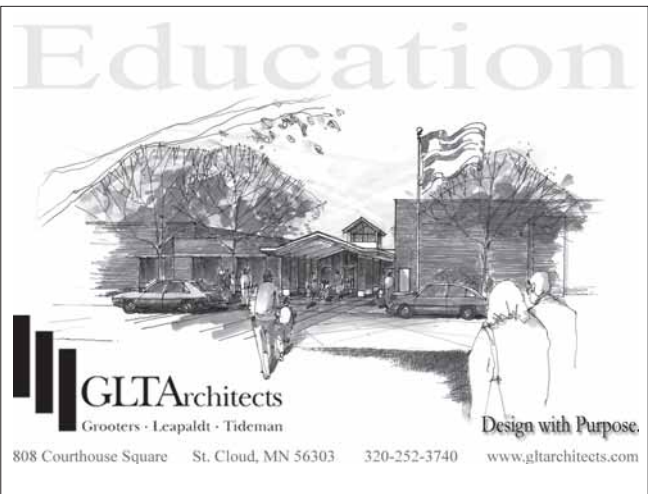
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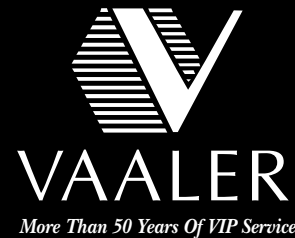
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## Three Most Important Things ... Continued from Page 5

High visibility/accessibility have been elevated to a formal School Board Aim as we strive to provide safe and welcoming schools. School leaders enjoy attending student activities and athletics and by doing so keep our finger on the pulse of student life. Sitting on the bleachers, in the auditorium, at the concessions areas, or passing in the hallways, we engage students, parents, and community members in a variety of conversations aimed at supporting our school system and strengthening programs. Participation in various civic organizations enables us to remain highly visible and add support to student and community causes. One of my most visible leadership opportunities has been membership in a grassroots community engagement group called Bemidji Leads. We held over 200 listening sessions in an effort to determine the community's destiny and have identified 17 Destiny Drivers which will help shape north central Minnesota's future. Lights seldom dim at a Bemidji school building as community members utilize beautiful facilities so graciously provided. From gigantic events such as the annual Pow

Wow; classic car show; or the annual Community New Year's Eve Party, hosting thousands of participants; to the Northern Elementary School Brownie Troop 959's weekly meetings, Bemidji Area Schools open its doors to provide excellent accessibility enhancing community support and engagement.

Service-oriented leadership challenges us to find ways to use personal and organizational resources to help meet the needs of our community. We have both the authority to act and the responsibility to act wisely as school leaders; often charged with one of the largest budgets and personnel payrolls in our communities. I often find myself evaluating decisions based on the elements of the Rotary Four Way Test; 1) Is it the truth? 2) Is it fair to all concerned? 3) Will it build good will and better friendships, and 4) Will it be beneficial to all

concerned? This may sound too simple in our complex world to use this measure, but for me it seems valid as we attempt to strengthen community engagement. Bemidji Area Schools is in the early stages of implementing the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence which calls for a strong student, stakeholder, and market focus. Through this dynamic process we will learn how to better meet student and stakeholder expectations and requirements and keep pace with market changes and changing methods of delivering educational services. Many of the measures we will use stress community relationship and engagement. We will employ a variety of listening and learning strategies seeking to understand and detail student and stakeholder expectations such as focus groups, surveys, interviews, and careful data analysis. •



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# Calendar 2006

March 15  
**Great Start Workshop V & Year 2 Cohort IV**  
 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

June 15-16  
**MASA Board of Directors Retreat**  
 Madden's Resort, Brainerd

July 27-28 (tentative)  
**Great Start Workshop I**  
 Galtier Plaza, St. Paul

October 1-3  
**MASA Fall Conference**  
 Madden's Resort, Brainerd

November 15-17  
**CLM Fall Conference**  
 Cragun's Resort, Brainerd


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