

Spring Conference Speech....March, 2007

By: Dr. Charles Kyte, Ph'd

It is easier to travel to another state with a briefcase than to stand up in front of your friends and peers.

I have just come from the Capitol where I spent the morning testifying on ways we could help to improve the education of our children.

I'm proud that MASA is one of the few associations that speaks for the good of our kids and for the future, rather than just improving the lot of the adults that work in public education

Lots of talk about raising more revenues or holding the line.

Let me share an interesting and non-partisan observation. The historic investment in Minnesota's public service sector (including schools) has ranged from 16-18% of our gross personal income.

**Democrats tend to push the high end
Republicans tend to push the low end
At the extremes, citizens correct at the ballot box
Have been at 16%...and this is why we have seen a correction.**

When I wear my educator hat I want to see higher revenues. When I wear my taxpayer hat I want to see taxes held down. This is part of the tension in operating any government. We had a Big Plan/ and a Big Deficit. Now a large share of school funding is coming from local levies. And if you 'get lucky' you have money.

I would like to share two challenges ahead of us and ask for your help in two ways.

Please look at the blue colored handout (attached)....I love having my little quote there with Horace Mann, Will Rogers and Albert Einstein

Schools are doing well. Scores up. Kids better, more focused. Re-design and reforms are underway....K12-H Ed partnerships are emerging

THE FIRST CHALLENGE

- 1) POVERTY...poverty does not by itself mean poor performance. Many examples of poor children doing very well. However, the issues associated with poverty create huge disincentives to success. Let me share one that is very important.**

	<u>Educated Class</u>	<u>Working Class</u>	<u>Poverty Class</u>
Wordsheard daily	3000	1500	600
+/- words daily	6+/1-	2+/1-	1+/ 2-

**** Early language development has a great influence on children's ability to learn and this is why we must invest in early learning readiness if we are going to have any hope of closing the achievement gap**

THE 2ND CHALLENGE

2) Global competitiveness and the knowledge worker shift that is underway

As we globalize, our workplaces need more knowledge workers and fewer laborers

We used to pay a premium for strength. Now we pay for knowledge. Example: Mr. Kunstal...strongest man in the mines.

Billboards...paper to vinyl to electronic. There go the paper hangers!

New World Trade Tower...Glass from MN and Wisconsin. Menominee, Spring Green, Northfield. 3 coatings: Insulation (6"), self cleaning inside and out. Well, there go the window washers!

See the handout:

	Old compact versus the challenge ahead of us			
	Educated	Literate	Socialized	
Labor based society	30%	40%	30%	Worked well
Knowledge based society	40%	50%	10%	Huge challenge

If we are going to be successful, the public schools are going to have to do this work!

I am also going to ask for your help:

First to educators in the audience (ask them to ID selves)

**** Address the victim mentality within the hearts of public educators...**

External criticisms have been internalized

Educators complain back to their communities

Tell 'Anna' story. We must become consumer sensitive, not act like victims

Friends avoid educators...what are we, chopped liver?

Address this openly with your colleague's and faculties.

Now to our business partners (ask them to ID selves)

**** Work with us to overcome the negative vibes in the non-education community about our schools**

**** Understand the funding trap.**

Unfunded Special Education expenses are now being paid with over \$_ Billion a year in MN.

When we get new money on formula, legislators call it a historic increase

Superintendents use \$'s to fill underinvestment in Special Education programs and cannibalize other programs to do so

Thus schools continue to have funding challenges, therefore people assume they must be poorly managed.

There is more reliance on local levies, and a diminishing willingness of citizens to support them

Understand the funding issue and help to resolve it.

**** Understand the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) trap.**

Minnesota has set the highest bar for standards, and student success in the nation.

The Federal system then punishes us by showing a greater percentage of our schools not making AYP. A school is identified as failing if just one sub group of students are not showing enough progress.

Don't be suckered in by this. We should demand high standards, but understand why Minnesota can have the highest test scores in the nation, yet look bad in 'state to state' comparisons.

Yet we feel it is better to push our kids academically than to drop standards and leave our children less prepared for their future.

As I conclude, let me share that next Monday...I, and 6 of our members will meet with Governor Pawlenty....3 messages

- 1) Help us to re-direct the federal law on education to encourage high standards and success**
- 2) Support providing the money we need to run our schools**
- 3) We commit to lead the way toward making MN schools truly World Competitive and World Class**

**** I am an enthusiastic supporter of all that is good within Public Schools**

**** I am honored to be in a position to push public educators and school leaders to create the changes needed within our institutions**

**** I have a tremendous faith in America's ability to meet the challenges ahead**

I ask you, as school and community leaders, to find ways to encourage educators to see themselves and their work in a positive light.

Help us, through positive support, to support the good work of educators and education leaders.

Thank you. Have a great afternoon as we continue with the MASE and MASA Spring Conference