Opportunities to Personalize Our Learning in the New School Year

Welcome to a new school year! To me, and I’m sure to all of us, this is the most exciting time of the year as students and staff return with enthusiasm and focus for what lies ahead. In our districts, we have prepared our staff for new initiatives and in some cases a re-commitment to prior initiatives that need to be implemented with fidelity. A part of our responsibility is to provide direction and prepare our staff with motivating messages that focus on doing what’s best for students that can carry forward throughout the year. In anticipation of the new school year, we prepare for new opportunities in our districts and the same is true for MASA as we prepare for new opportunities for our members.

At the June Board retreat for MASA, board members heard from Dr. Jim Rickabaugh on the topic of “Tapping the Power of Personalized Learning.” Personalized learning has been discussed for decades and leaders have been pursuing ways to implement a personalized learning plan for our students through a myriad of ways. We are now beginning to create learning environments that facilitate flexible and collaborative classroom spaces and many districts are implementing one-to-one technology or supporting bring-your-own-device to maximize 21st Century learning experiences more now than at any other time in history.

While school district leaders look for avenues to create, support and attempt to make personalized learning experiences scalable for our teachers and students, so too does MASA look for ways to make professional growth and development personalized and timely. One of my priorities for MASA is for our association to provide adequate resources and support for quality professional development opportunities for all administrators. That priority also aligns with one of the strategic goals for MASA that states, “by 2017, MASA will coordinate professional learning that meets the needs and interests of each member.” One way MASA is meeting this goal is by providing an opportunity to support each region financially for professional development tailored to member needs if the region applies for funding.

MASA is also meeting this goal by providing personalized professional development opportunities. Last spring was MASA’s first attempt to provide a just-in-time personalized learning experience meant to be meaningful and relevant for members. It was titled, “The UnConference Session.” This approach will be used again this fall. The Edcamp/UnConference is an opportunity for all of our members to design their own learning experience by exploring the topics we will determine ourselves at.

Opportunities to Personalize Our Learning continued on page 10.
Special thanks to our 2016-17 MASA Business Partners!

The MASA Business Partner Program provides opportunities for businesses to connect with Minnesota’s educational leaders. Our core belief is that MASA’s role in engaging business partners is to facilitate a rich conversation that helps our practitioner members understand what resources are available to support their districts, and our business partner members understand the needs of our school districts.

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**Executive View**

**Moving Toward Balance In Our Lives**

Earlier this summer I shared the following in our MASA weekly update. I received some positive feedback and felt it was well worth it to have these thoughts included in our newsletter.

The message focuses on committing to finding more balance in our lives. I know that as dedicated professionals, you spend countless hours working on behalf of the students and staff that you serve. Jonathan Lockwood Huie, in an article entitled “Finding Balance in Life Beats Moderation, Eight Ways to Balance Your Life,” suggests ways to achieve balance.

1. Balance activity with serenity. Exercise and rest are both essential to a healthy and joyful life.
2. Balance wealth with simplicity. The best things in life truly are free, but there is also a place for material accomplishments - both for your own sake and for the sake of the world. Avoid the clutter of collecting excess possessions, but treat yourself with a few special items, trips, and other benefits of the modern world.
3. Balance persistence with innovation. Albert Einstein is sometimes quoted as saying, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” Practice, patience, and persistence are essential to success in life, but recognize when the time comes to stop what you are doing and to search for a different route toward your life goals.
4. Balance community with solitude. Life success requires teamwork with a community of like-minded companions, yet you must also allow time for solitude - time for contemplation, time for relaxation, and time to be your own self with no pressure to conform or to please others.
5. Balance familiarity with adventure. Adventure is like the seasoning on your meal - life is monotonous and boring without adventure, yet there is also a crucial place for the familiar. Physically and emotionally comfortable surroundings are essential to your wellbeing. There is no place like a comfortable home from which to launch your adventures and to which you return - either as the victorious hero or in shameless defeat, ready to recharge and set out on the next adventure.
6. Balance constancy with change. Tradition lends a comforting structure to life. Imagine if at each meal you had to decide on which side of the plate to place the fork. Doing what our parents did before us and their parents did before them, creates a stability and eases the small details of life. However, constancy is also habit, and there is a time to question all old habits - perhaps consciously renewing them, but hopefully often deciding to make new choices.
7. Balance leading with following. There are times to follow, but also times to raise your own torch and lead, as well as times to choose to disengage. Life is too short to fight all the battles. Choose your causes wisely, and then choose whether you need to become a leader of the cause.
8. Balance being of service - both to this generation and to generations yet unborn - with renewing your vitality by play and celebration. A life without service is not likely to be fulfilling, but you must charge your own batteries - physical, mental, and emotional - before you can inspire, motivate, and serve others.

It might be worth your time to think about these eight ways and to work to implement them. I hope you are successful this year in bringing more balance to your life!

As always please contact me at (651) 319-1211 or gamoroso@mnasa.org if I can ever be of service to you!
**Fall Conference Preview**

A “best practice” is a method that reliably leads to desired results. Great school leaders create effective systems that adapt to rapid and pervasive change, provide a culture supporting risk-taking and experimentation, and nurture a climate of possibilities. A best leadership practice in school districts manifests itself in strong systems that support those targets and therefore excellence for all students. Join your colleagues this fall as we share our own regional best leadership practices.

Networking, Networking, Networking! There will be numerous opportunities to socialize with colleagues you already know, as well as grow your professional network with fellow administrators from around the state. On Sunday afternoon, golfers will enjoy the MASA Foundation Golf Tournament Mixer. The tournament is newly named the Dale G. Jensen Classic to honor Dale’s many years of spearheading this important fundraiser. Information to register to golf can be found at www.mnasa.org. Sunday evening after dinner, we’ll gather for a casual Welcome Reception. We will announce the golf tournament results, so all the winners will get their bragging rights early in the conference!

**Inspiring Keynote Speakers!** Monday will feature a keynote address from Dave Weber, who will present one of his most frequently requested programs, "Sticks & Stones Exposed: The Truth Behind Words & Relationships." The high demand for this program is due to its impact on the culture and climate of a school and the resulting improvement in student achievement, through the creation of a positive learning community. Tuesday will feature MASA’s 2016 Richard Green Scholar Dr. James Johnson, presenting his research “An Evaluation of Implementation and Effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities in Minnesota Public Schools.” Dr. Johnson’s presentation will inform us of the proper understanding of professional learning communities’ (PLC) concepts and practices. His study sought to determine if PLCs were being implemented effectively based on best practices described in research by: describing and contrasting the characteristics of PLCs employed in public school districts in Minnesota, the districts’ duration of use of PLCs, and barriers teachers and administrators have encountered when implementing PLCs.

**Customize Your Experience!** Individualize your professional learning with ten different breakout sessions presented by your fellow MASA members to choose from - and visit Monday’s Exhibit Fair. With more than 80 exhibitors offering the innovative products and services, you’ll discover the latest educational technology available for your students and communities.

**Celebrate Your Colleagues!** Throughout the conference we will be celebrating the service of our colleagues. In addition to celebrating our members’ years of service with milestone pins, we will present the 2016 Richard Green Scholar scholarship to Dr. James Johnson (special thank you to Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc.) and the 2016 Polaris Award to Dr. Jim Hess (special thank you to Ehlers).

**Gain Association Insights!** Make plans to attend the Annual Meeting Monday afternoon. In addition to our annual business meetings, we will recognize our colleagues achievement with service pins, learn about MASA strategic plan progress, and hear from Gary Amoroso about the vision for next year.

Edcamp! Join us on Monday afternoon for our Edcamp, an opportunity for all of our participants to design their own conference experience by exploring the topics you determine. Our Edcamp subcommittee will be on hand to help participants arrange for the conferencing spaces and to extend invitations to the discussions. Our members ARE our experts, and here is a great chance to share knowledge and ideas.
I f you registered for the MASA Fall Conference be sure to also register to play in the annual MASA Foundation Golf Tournament. Register online at: www.regonline.com/MASAFoundationGolf.

The tournament is newly named the Dale G. Jensen Classic to honor Dale’s many years of spearheading this important fundraiser. All conference participants are invited to play, no matter your skill level!

The tournament will be held at the Pine Beach West Golf Course at Madden’s on Gull Lake.

Plan to be at the golf course about 30 minutes early (11:30 am) to check-in and participate in the putting contest. Donate $5 at the golf check-in desk for 4 chances to putt. Each golfer may participate twice. Each hole-in-one is worth one entry into the grand prize drawing. This year there will be two putting contests each with a grand prize of a $150 gift card to Madden’s on Gull Lake!

Let’s “grow our own” leaders for tomorrow’s schools. We encourage you to consider a pledge to the MASA Foundation to help Minnesota’s education system continue to improve by developing the skills of our leaders.

The mission of the 501(c)(3) School Administrators Charitable and Educational Foundation is to enhance the leadership development of educational administrators, to encourage and support individuals interested in careers in teaching or educational administration, to enhance the role and image of educational administrators, and to conduct research and provide information to policymakers and the public at large.

The generosity of our members allows the MASA Foundation to award grants to individual members to further their professional development. These grants provide up to $750 to members with particular needs that cannot be otherwise met by their districts, allowing members to participate in conferences, workshops and training opportunities they may have otherwise been denied.

The MASA Foundation is proud to sponsor MASA’s Professional Assistance Team (P.A.T). The P.A.T program directly supports the Foundation’s mission of leadership development and individual support by meeting the immediate need of MASA members to confidentially discuss issues, seek advice, and receive valuable coaching from experienced and trusted MASA colleagues. Meet the 2016-17 P.A.T. members on page 20.

The MASA Foundation also sponsors the MASA Mentorship Program. Through guidance and coaching, networking, training, and social support, MASA’s Mentorship Program supports administrators new to their role in building the capacity to lead their schools in student growth.

Help us meet our goals:

1. Provide outstanding workshops for early career & mid-career school leaders.
2. Provide grants to MASA members engaging in creative professional development.
3. Create an endowment fund to support the work of the MASA Foundation.

You can donate by registering to play in the 2016 Foundation Golf Tournament at www.regonline.com/MASAFoundationGolf.

Thank you to the 2016-17 MASA Foundation Board of Directors!

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Building Design + Construction magazine ranks Kraus-Anderson #6 nationally in construction of K-12 schools.

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Mary Amoroso
Did You Know?

MASA Offers a Variety of Online Professional Learning Opportunities and Resources

Each year, MASA’s Executive Development Committee works to identify and address the professional learning needs of our members. In addition to our traditional conferences and workshops, the MASA website is equipped with a variety of just-in-time online professional learning options and leadership resources, including:

Whitewater Learning, is not a MASA product, but we recommend it as an affordable online library of high-quality modules that align with state and national competencies and offer pre-approved teacher and administrator CEUs.

ExpertEase. A catalog of short online videos on a variety of education leadership topics. These videos provide certification of participation that can be used when renewing teacher licensure. Videos are available to all MASA members free of cost via the Infinitec website.

What We Are Reading. Our book blog contains book reviews, book notes, and discussion questions. This is a great resource for staff development exercises, a teaching tool during lectures, or if you simply enjoy a good book.

Voice of MN Education blog. Each week we publish a blog post or video from Gary Amoroso to inform our members of organization news, share legislative updates, or feature our colleagues as guest bloggers.

Professional Assistance Team (PAT). MASA members may need advice or consultation as they run into new or difficult situations. The PAT members have offered to use their experiences to help their colleagues navigate these situations. You can find a list of PAT members on the MASA website, and may contact anyone of them as you seek assistance.

The UnConference can do just that; it will afford members who have questions or who have been researching topics of interest to share their expertise and experiences with everyone who is interested in the topic. It also affords members the opportunity to sit in on a topic that they are interested in exploring but haven’t had the time to begin researching. The goal is to connect learners with others who have like interests and would otherwise not have known of similar experiences or interests. It is MASA’s intention this fall to support you by organizing and providing dedicated time and space for you to accrue skills and make choices in pursuit of meeting your personal and professional growth and development goals and interests. Whatever topic you engage with, we look forward to your participation and leadership in these sessions.

It is an honor to serve as your MASA President and I look forward to maximizing our students’ educational experiences as well as our members’ experiences. I hope everyone has a great start to the school year and I look forward to your involvement in helping yourselves and your colleagues in personalizing your learning.

Have a great year! •
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Regional Professional Development Grant Program

The MASA Board of Directors has established two grant programs to support the regional professional development needs of its members.

**Basic Regional Grant**

Each of the nine MASA regions is eligible to annually receive a $750 grant to support professional development within the region. To access the basic grant, the regional leadership team must request the funds by sending a written communication to the MASA Executive Director requesting the funds and briefly describing how the grant will be used. The Executive Director has discretion over approval of the basic grant.

**Major Project Regional Grant**

In addition to the basic grant funds, MASA will dedicate $15,000 per fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) to support professional development for three regions per year with $5,000 per region. Eligible regions will rotate. The regional rotation schedule has been determined by lottery with Region 6 at the end of the rotation due to the region receiving a pilot grant in FY2015-16. The first rotation is as follows:

- 2015-16 Region 6 (Pilot Grant)
- 2016-17 Regions 1, 2, and 5
- 2017-18 Regions 3, 7, and 8
- 2018-19 Regions 4, 6, and 9

The professional development topic/content is at the discretion of the region members, but regions are encouraged to take into consideration the input and needs of all MASA component groups.

Regions wishing to participate must notify MASA by July 1 of the fiscal year in which the region is eligible and provide a description of the professional development that will be supported by this funding. The request must come from the Regional Leadership Team. Find your Regional Leaders at www.mnasa.org/regionleaders and on page 11.

Regions not wishing to participate, or not ready to participate, may decline. The designated funds will be held in reserve for one year, after which the funds will not be available to the region until the next "rotation."

The regions receiving funding will present their outcomes at a conference the year following the funded year.

Registration is still open for the 2016-17 Great Start Cohort (GSC)! We currently have 20 cohort members registered - don't miss out on this year-long professional learning opportunity as enter your new role as a school administrator!

MASA is committed to providing excellent professional development that will support you in your professional practice. As a member of the GSC, you will have the opportunity to meet other new leaders, receive information from seasoned leaders, and develop practical skills designed to help you be successful in the first year of your new position. In addition to the five traditional workshops (linked to statewide conferences for travel and schedule ease), participants will also receive access to the GSC Online Toolbox filled with supporting documents and videos on popular topics. Continuing Education Units will be granted for each session in the series. Whether you are an experienced administrator or are new to your leadership role, this workshop series is a wonderful opportunity to network with your colleagues and enhance your skills.

Register online today at: [www.regonline.com/greatstart](http://www.regonline.com/greatstart)

Here are the remaining dates for the 2016-17 Cohort:

**Sunday, October 2 at Madden’s on Gull Lake in Brainerd**

The day before the MASA Fall Conference

**Wednesday, November 16 at Cragun’s Conference Center in Brainerd**

The day before the fall instructional leadership conference

**Wednesday, January 11 at the MASA offices**

The day before the Minnesota School Boards Association winter conference

**Wednesday, March 8 at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest**

The day before the MASA/MASE Spring Conference

MASA is grateful to Springsted Incorporated for their continuing support of the Great Start Cohort!
The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. James Hess, Superintendent of Bemidji Area Schools, the recipient of the MASA Polaris Leadership Award. Superintendent Hess will be honored for his exemplary school leadership and a lifetime of balanced achievement inside and outside of education at a statewide recognition ceremony to be held at the MASA Fall Conference, October 2-4, 2016, in Brainerd, Minnesota.

Polaris, the “North Star,” themes this award because, just as exemplary administrators serve as definitive leaders, Polaris is constant and unmoving in the sky. A navigator’s benchmark, the star marks “true north,” the fundamental direction that defines east, west and south. With this award, Dr. Hess is recognized for qualities such as professional courage, creation of a legacy of excellent leadership, fostering innovation, contribution through example and mentoring, exemplary conduct reflecting integrity and bearing emulation, and significant tenure in each position to support district vision and affect positive change.

Dr. Hess has helped create three new community preschools to address the needs of at-risk learners; provided for the educational needs of all children by passing a bond constructing 100 new classrooms and two new schools; assisted the Legislative Committee in rewriting the State School Finance Formula to recognize relative costs of students’ educational programs by weighted pupil basis; and worked with community groups to pass three operating levy referendums which added opportunities to maintain reasonable class sizes, operate all-day, every-day kindergarten, and replace aging school buses.

Dr. Hess has 37 years of education administration experience, ranging from principal to executive director to superintendent, and has been serving Bemidji Public Schools since 2004. Dr. Hess has been involved in several educational and community organizations such as: MASA,

Polaris Leadership Award continued on page 17.

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. James Johnson, Superintendent at Monticello Public Schools, the 2016 Richard Green Scholar. Dr. Johnson will present his research, “An Evaluation of Implementation and Effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities in Minnesota Public Schools” at the MASA Fall Conference, October 2-4, 2016, in Brainerd, Minnesota.

MASA, with the support of Cuningham Group Architecture, Inc., established the Richard Green Scholars Program in 2006 to honor the scholarly work and professional development of Minnesota school leaders. The program is an annual recognition of the research, writing, and presentation of a paper reflecting the practice of excellent school leadership. Scholar candidates apply for the program and a subcommittee of the MASA Executive Development Committee selects the recipient.

Prior to his position as Superintendent at Monticello Public Schools, Dr. Johnson served as the district’s Assistant Superintendent and Middle School Principal. He has also served as an administrator in the New Prague School District. Jim also was a teacher in the Sartell School District.

Dr. Johnson earned his Doctor of Education in Educational Administration and Leadership from St. Cloud State University in May 2016. He earned his 6th Year Certificate and Master of Science from St. Cloud State University. He received his Bachelor of Science from the University of Minnesota.

Throughout his professional career Dr. Johnson has been interested in professional development and firmly believes quality professional development is the key to continuous professional growth among educators. His passion in this area led him to leadership opportunities as a teacher and was critical to his calling to administration. Recently, Dr. Johnson’s doctoral study focused on professional learning communities as the critical vehicle for creating a culture in our schools that will lead to the goal of continuous improvement. •
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While the prospects of a special session have become less likely, focus now turns to the November elections. While there is no statewide office on the ballot, the focus is high on the presidential race. However, it’s important to remember the entire Minnesota House and Senate is also up for re-election this year. The last several elections have shown that anything is up for grabs, with control of the House and Senate changing each election cycle. This election has us again pondering what the makeup of the legislature will look like.

Currently, Republicans have a 73-61 majority over their DFL counterparts in the House. The Republicans have six retiring members while the Democrats have four retiring, and five members running for the State Senate. For the House Democrats to retake the majority, they will need to retain the nine vacated seats and win elections in seven seats currently held by Republicans.

In the Senate, Democrats currently have a 39-28 majority over their Republicans counterparts. Senate Democrats have eight retiring members, one member running for Congress, and the Senate Republicans have four retiring members. For Senate Republicans to flip the majority, they would need to retain the four vacated seats while picking up six seats that are currently represented by a Democrat.

Even though a lot of focus is spent on re-election bids, legislators are also spending time looking at issues for the next legislative session. First, working groups are meeting to look at student discipline and teacher licensure and we expect recommendations to be brought forward next session. The Legislative Auditor is doing an evaluation on standardized student testing and most likely will have recommendations for legislative changes.

Looking to the 2017 session, the legislature and the governor must pass a new two-year state budget. Because of the veto of the tax bill a number of issues remain on the table – most notably a proposal to address agricultural land, bond referendums and property taxes. Other issues that will hold our focus continue to be the per-pupil formula and an unresolved fix to address the instability in the Teacher Retirement Association fund.

While you focus on the start of the school year, this time of year also provides you a good opportunity to connect with elected officials and new candidates running for office. They seek every opportunity to talk to voters and love to hear from you (particularly during an election year) – it’s an opportunity to educate candidates about your issues as they relate to your school district and the students you serve.

**Legislative Update**

2016 Elections and 2017 Session Preview

While the prospects of a special session have become less likely, focus now turns to the November elections. While there is no statewide office on the ballot, the focus is high on the presidential race. However, it’s important to remember the entire Minnesota House and Senate is also up for re-election this year. The last several elections have shown that anything is up for grabs, with control of the House and Senate changing each election cycle. This election has us again pondering what the makeup of the legislature will look like.

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**MASA Committee Meeting Dates**

The meeting dates for the 2016-17 MASA Committees have been announced!

- **Executive Development Committee**
  - Monday, October 24, 2016
  - 10 am - 2 pm

- **Legislative Committee**
  - Tuesday, November 1, 2016
  - 10 am - 3 pm

- **Nominating Committee**
  - Wednesday, November 2, 2016
  - 11 am - 1:30 pm

- **Federal Advocacy Committee**
  - Monday, November 21, 2016
  - 11 am - 1:30 pm

All meetings will be held at the MASA Offices in St. Paul.

Please RSVP to dchristians@mnasa.org.

We will also have video teleconferencing available for committee members who need to attend remotely!

Visit www.mnasa.org/committees for a full listing of all the MASA Committees!

**MASA Twitter Chats**

#MNMASA Second Sunday of the Month @ 8 pm

Many of our current members have discovered the power of Twitter Chats through #mnlead, #edtech, #iaedchat and many others. Each of these chats allows participants to share their experiences while also learning from the experiences shared by participating colleagues. #MNMASA will provide our members with opportunities to engage and learn from others in district leadership about the experiences being realized.

Our discussions take place the second Sunday of the month at 8:00 pm. Chats are facilitated by Bill Adams, Superintendent at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton (@JWPBulldog) and Teri Preisler, Superintendent at Tri-City United (@TPreisler). Topics will be developed for each week’s conversation with future topics coming from those participating in the chats.

Please let us know whether you are interested — go to https://sites.google.com/site/mnnmasatwitterchat and click on the Twitter Chat Form tab. For details, please click on the “How To” tab at the above address.
The Evolution to Team Leadership in Education Technology

In the earliest days of technology in schools, infrastructure usually consisted of a lab full of Apple IIe computers used for word processing and simple interactive learning activities such as Oregon Trail and Number Munchers. In those days, personal computers were the newest advent in the world of technology and schools were adopting them at a rapid rate. There were no concerns about digital citizenship; we mostly worried that students (or teachers) would be sticking their fingers through the center hole of the 5 ¼ floppy disk. In some schools, teachers were put on special assignment for an hour or two per day to take care of the computer labs and make sure everything was in working order and troubleshoot issues with their nearest service center if necessary. Overall, systems seemed to run dependably and were normally relevant and cutting-edge for about eight years without a question. Life seemed good and computer technology was progressing quickly for the time.

Thirty years later, and here we are. Apple IIe computers can be seen in museums, and are a distant memory or an unknown concept for many. We’ve seen enterprise-class networks develop and interconnect our districts in ways we couldn’t have imagined in the 1980’s. The Internet delivers an endless supply of information, media, classroom resources, with exponentially increasing bandwidth demands every year. Schools also need to monitor for digital threats and inappropriate material. Software systems are continually collecting and analyzing data on all components of our educational ecosystems and providing us with trend and analysis information that is driving the instructional and administrative decisions we are make every day. Educators and students are mobile, and have ready access to devices. Some schools now have a device to student ratio that exceeds 1 to 1 and in some cases is quickly approaching 2 or 3 to 1. The days of scheduling time to use the computer lab are over, and the technology is now in student and teacher hands. Even the smallest wearable technologies have many times the computing power and storage capacity than the Apple IIe computer we relied on years ago.

Remember how that teacher on special assignment could keep the technology running for a couple hours each day? That too, is a distant memory for school districts across Minnesota and the nation. As technology has evolved and made our lives easier to manage, the complexity of maintaining, servicing and training end users on proper implementation and integration of those technologies has also significantly increased. As use and dependability that schools have on technology has continued to increase, so too has the expectations and reliance on the school technology department. School district technology leaders of the past two decades have seen some of the most dramatic and radical changes in responsibility and demands of almost any leadership position within our school systems. Technology directors have seen their role switch from one of desktop computer installation and troubleshooting technician to being a role of leadership, supervision, and decision-making, along with dramatically different professional development paths in technical support or technology integration roles.

Technology implementation within our schools is now truly a team effort, even in the smallest of Minnesota’s rural school districts, where the technology director might still be a teacher on special assignment for a couple hours per day.

The key to success in providing a technology environment that is going to successfully serve our school systems falls on two simple, but very complex components: relationships and professional development.

Relationships are all about ensuring that the school district has a great team of people working together, from the technology leader, support staff, and instructional technology integrationists to external components such as personnel in a regional cooperative or contracted support from a business. All of the state-of-the-art technology can be purchased, but if the district lacks the right combination of staff with the right skills in place to make those components work together, the district has nothing but a lot of expensive machinery. As a technology leader, one of the biggest challenges is finding the right talents and personalities in people, and applying those skills and knowledge to support an enterprise-class system on a school-class budget. In the days of the Apple IIe, schools were more concerned about the names students were adding to headstones and the leader board in the Oregon Trail than trying to bring our technology staff together to work towards the common good of our schools.

Once the right people are in place, appropriate and timely professional development is critical. In the last ten years, how many different operating systems, devices, software and web-based applications have you used? How much
training and experimentation did it take before you felt comfortable operating those technologies? How many times did you call your school's technology department needing assistance, expecting them to have the answers? How much time and budget was your technology department allocated for professional development to become experts in that new technology? Normally the answer to the latter is "not much, if any." While we cannot expect to create in-depth expertise in every application or system that is in place within our schools, we do need to provide our technology staff members with the ability to research, problem-solve, make contacts and coordinate the support or correction of issues. When incorporating professional development opportunities for technology staff, the focus should be on the most broadly used software and devices to build up a great internal support system for the technologies in use, but also to focus on broader skill sets such as project management, service level management and customer service. These types of professional development needs reflect the very radical changes in the school district technology leadership roles that we have seen within the last ten years.

Today's school technology leaders also need to think beyond purely technology infrastructure decisions but must focus on the overall educational goals of the school district and then help apply the roles, tasks and responsibilities to technology department staff to help support those goals. Going a step further, the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), has developed a framework of essential skills that technology leaders should possess and has developed a nationally recognized certification process around the framework, the Certified Education Technology Leader (CETL) certification.

The process of preparing for and taking the CETL examination is a very rigorous process and one that validates a technology leader's skillsets in administering a world-class, 21st Century education technology environment. The job of technology leader is no longer confined to simply keeping computer labs in operating condition and the administrative systems running, it has expanded to enhancing and supporting the education of every student in our schools at an individualized level, quite the drastic shift from where we were just three decades ago.

**Polaris Leadership Award from page 13.**

Lakeland Public Television Board of Directors, Joint Economic Development Commission, St. Philips Church Lector, Bemidji Symphony Orchestra supporter and guest conductor, Bemidji Noon Rotary Club, Paul Harris Fellow, and assisted with planning and preparation for Bemidji Day at the Capitol. Dr. Hess has also served as a guest lecturer at Bemidji State University, Moorhead State University, St. Cloud State University, Colorado University, and the University of Northern Colorado. In 2008, Dr. Hess was selected as the MASA Region 8 Administrator of the Year and the Region 8 Administrator of Excellence.

Dr. Hess received his doctorate's degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado. He received his master's degree in elementary administration and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Northern State College in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

**StormReady™**

MASA has been pleased to add an important new resource to our members' toolboxes for monitoring the weather. **StormReady™** is an online resource that provides specific weather data by zip code. The website is filled with easy to read and relevant graphics and images for superintendents to make data-driven decisions. The “Hourly Weather Forecast Graph” forecasts many weather variables over a 24-hour period, including temperature, snow fall, rainfall, wind chill, and other variables that contribute to seasonal weather hazards. For example, a superintendent can see the temperature, windchill, and snowfall predictions for the start of the school day.

Additionally, the National Weather Service provides thorough education focused on preparing our schools to be StormReady™. On this website you will find a link for “Storm Ready in a Box.” This online kit and video provides background for staff or student groups and/or Earth Science classes to prepare their school(s) to be StormReady™.

Get started by visiting www.mnasa.org/stormready
A very important part of the work of MASA is to provide outstanding service to the members of the association. Besides a strong professional development component, MASA wants to stand ready to help members as they navigate the many complex situations that they face on a day-to-day basis. The five member Professional Assistance Team (P.A.T.) is made up of highly experienced school leaders who will use their expertise to help their colleagues when they need consultation and/or advice. The members of the 2016-17 P.A.T. are listed below...

**Examples of services the P.A.T. provides:**
- Answers to questions regarding your role as a school leader
- Advice on how to handle specific situations involving the community, school board(s), employees, students, and operational situations
- Communication situations

P.A.T. members will always maintain confidentiality when working with our members.
Minnevate! and Moonshot Thinking – the Conversation Continues

by Mia Urick, Director of Professional Learning, MASA

In a recent post on Singularity HUB entitled, “Why We Need Moonshot Thinking in High School Education”¹, Alison E. Berman writes:

“With about 20% of teens dropping out of high school and 5.6 million Americans between the ages of 16-24 (that’s 1 in 7) disconnected from both school and work, it isn’t too wild to say that we have an engagement crisis in the US.

This lack of engagement comes at a high cost to the economy and to taxpayers, who spend $93 billion dollars annually on disconnected youth (those not in school or working) and $1.6 trillion over their lifetime.

But that spending isn’t preparing the population to thrive in today’s workforce.

In fact, 40% of U.S. companies cannot find qualified candidates to fill their jobs, and employers spend more on skills training annually than universities and government combined.

... Put simply, moonshot thinking is when you approach a huge challenge (like disengaged high school students) with a radical solutions-oriented mindset. In this mindset, the focus is on creating solutions that can make 10x improvements to the problem rather than 10% improvements.

Moonshot thinking motivates teams to think big by framing problems as solvable and encouraging ‘anything is possible’ dialogues around how to solve the challenge.”

In December 2013, MASA began a conversation called “Minnevate!” During 2013-14, we hosted regional discussions designed to explore and bridge the space between our visions for the future of Minnesota’s schools and the realities of today. We gathered dialogue data using the World Café hosting model and coded and reported that data in our first (2013-14) report. (Find a link to the report at minnevate.mnasa.org.)

MASA members are our state’s education experts and it is appropriate that they convene the conversations about the future of Minnesota education. MASA has always intended that Minnevate! exist as a place for conversation, ideas, and commentary – NOT an “initiative” that would result in a report that would be read by few, that would get dusty on a shelf, that would be devoid of meaning. We often say that Minnevate! isn’t a “thing,” it’s not a committee you have to be on, or a finite product—or a conversation that belongs to a select few, no more than public education belongs to a select few. Minnevate! exists as a place to figure out where we are now, where we want to go, and how to get there. Minnevate! is our place for Moonshot Thinking. It’s that simple, and of course that complex.

The MASA leadership continues to be committed to Minnevate! The current MASA Strategic Plan features the strategy: “Through Minnevate!, we will foster relationships with all stakeholders to create and advocate a common public education agenda in Minnesota,” and specifically the action step: “Develop a common understanding of purposes of education and solicit feedback.”

This fall, we will once again be visiting our MASA Regions to add an additional data layer to the Minnevate! conversation. For the upcoming meetings, our theme will be, “Understanding the ‘public’ in public education: Community voices about the value of schools,” with the intent of examining citizen perspectives on the value of schools to communities, important student outcomes, and priorities for the future. Our lead facilitator will be Aaron Ruhland, Director of Learning and Accountability for the Orono Schools. Aaron has contributed to Minnevate! over the past two years as an MASA member and will also use the data from this set of focus groups to support his doctoral dissertation.

We have asked superintendents throughout the state to identify potential participants who have a broad knowledge and perspective of school purpose and goals with the hope of convening focus groups with a participant majority of community members. Participants who are district leaders and staff, as well as school board members, will be welcomed with open arms, but we want to be very intentional about harvesting the voices of the wider community. We have suggested that members from school districts’ curriculum advisory councils who possess broad knowledge and perspective about school purpose and goals would be good candidates for this conversation.

We will once again collect the conversation data (participants’ comments will be confidential), code it, and report it as additional data for the Minnevate! conversation. Thank you to our MASA members and our wider community for your support of and participation in what we believe is a significant opportunity to bridge the gap between our current reality and a collective vision for the future of education in Minnesota.

References


Did You Move?

Help us keep track of you (and keep your MASA benefits and services coming to you). Please contact members@mnasa.org to update your records. If you have new colleagues in your area who are not MASA members, let us know and we will send membership information to them.
November elections—particularly in the wake of a rancorous presidential campaign or when a referendum is on the ballot—create unique dilemmas for public school districts. They must remain politically neutral without impermissibly infringing upon their employees’ rights to free speech and association. This sometimes delicate balance can be maintained if certain legal principles are followed.

Public school board members and school district employees should understand that the law limits, to some degree, their right to personal political expression. State law prohibits school district funds from being used to support political candidates, parties, or issues. The Minnesota fair campaign law forbids school district board members and employees from using “official authority or influence to compel a person to apply for membership in or become a member of a political organization, to pay or promise to pay a political contribution, or to take part in political activity.” The same law, however, specifically prohibits school districts from imposing or enforcing additional limitations on the political activities of their employees. Outside of district board rooms and school classrooms, board members and employees may otherwise engage in political activities on the same basis as other citizens. The First Amendment guarantees all citizens the right to free expression on matters of public concern. Campaign literature and speech regarding political issues presumably address matters of public concern and thus constitute protected speech.

Given this framework, school districts often face the following questions:

Q: What may teachers say to parents or students at school regarding the election?
A: At school, teachers may provide parents and students with factual information, such as when and where to vote. They may not, however, tell parents or students how to vote (i.e., “yes” or “no” on an issue or for a particular candidate) while working in their official capacities as teachers (i.e., during instruction, before or after school activities, and conferences).

Q: Where and when may teachers wear buttons?
A: A federal court has ruled that a school district may ban teachers from wearing political campaign buttons while working because wearing “political paraphernalia may improperly influence the right of students to learn in an environment free of partisan political influence.” Weingarten v. Bd. of Educ. of City Sch. Dist., 680 F. Supp. 2d 585 (S.D.N.Y. 2010). However, in the absence of a policy prohibiting political buttons at school, teachers generally may wear buttons to work just as they would anywhere else—provided that the buttons do not result in disruption to the educational environment or do not have a coercive influence on students or other staff.

Q: May teachers place signs on their lawns?
A: Yes.

Q: May school district employees engage in political fundraising activities?
A: School district employees may participate in private fund raising activities. However, state law prohibits them from using their official authority or influence to coerce others to take part in the fund raising activities.

Q: May teachers write letters to newspapers?
A: Teachers have the right to express their personal opinions and may do so in the media. While they may identify themselves as school district teachers, they also should make it clear that the letter expresses only their own personal beliefs. The letter should not be written on school district letterhead and, if sent by e-mail, should not come from a school district computer. School district funds may not be used to support a political candidate or promote a position on an issue. Using school district supplies or equipment would be tantamount to using school district funds.

Q: May school district employees serve on political campaigns or committees?
A: Yes. School employees enjoy the same rights to free speech and involvement in political activities as private citizens. However, they must participate in the capacity of Notre Dame, Indiana. 106 N.E. 3d 1149 (7th Cir. 2013).
A: The ability of school employees to engage in such activity depends upon whether home telephone numbers and home e-mail addresses are deemed public directory information under the district's data privacy policy. If the information would be available to any citizen, then district employees may use it to communicate with parents and students in this manner. If, however, the information is not available to the public as directory information, school employees may not use the telephone numbers and email addresses to communicate with parents or students on political matters unless the numbers are obtained from some other public source such as a telephone book.

Q: Do the rules change when a school district employee is off-site and out in public?

A: Generally, yes. While school district employees may not advocate a specific political position on school premises during the school day while on duty, they may certainly, in their personal capacities, engage in political activities on the same basis as any citizen. •

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.

Greg Madsen is an attorney and shareholder at Kennedy & Graven, Chartered, who practices education and employment law, and is certified by the Minnesota State Bar Association as a Labor and Employment Law Specialist. For more information, please contact him at (612) 337-9305 or www.kennedy-graven.com. This article is an update to a Fall 2008 Leaders Forum article by former Kennedy & Graven attorney Charles E. Long. © Gregory S. Madsen (2016). Used by permission.
As a trusted partner, FJJ specializes in complicated and challenging educational facility projects. We take the time listen carefully to what the schools and their communities want, plan around those needs and goals, design to the highest standards, and execute our projects with precision.
Put Me In, Coach...Notes For Mentors

Our Greatest Challenge

If I were the all benevolent dictator of education in America and was asked to address the greatest challenge we face today, it would be this: Student Behavior. It's a problem across the board. Disruptive students are destroying the learning environment for those who want to learn in far too many classrooms across the country. Even in our more affluent districts where the behavior isn't as threatening or serious as in other schools, three or four students can destroy the academic atmosphere their teachers are trying to create and have no apparent desire to change their behavior.

The purpose of this article isn't to fix the blame for the problem but to encourage us to fix the problem. It is the single most important challenge we educators face today and one of the greatest deterrents to academic success. Let's address it with a sense of urgency.

Let me preface my remarks with a story of a conversation with a friend at a party. She told of a dysfunctional acquaintance with two preschool age children headed down that same path, wondering what was ever to become of the kids. I jokingly said, "I know the solution. Wait ten or fifteen years and we can blame it on public education."

The report "A Nation at Risk" published in 1983 stated that "Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purpose...and high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them....That we have compromised this commitment is, upon reflection, hardly surprising, given the multitude of often conflicting demands we have placed on our Nation's schools and colleges." (Google "A Nation at Risk." It is great food for thought.)

I will be the first to admit that I don't have many answers. It is not the purpose of this article to give advice but rather to encourage all of us to prioritize the issue and to work aggressively to find alternatives to the status quo. We need to create schools that maintain a climate conducive to academic excellence for those who want to learn while finding alternative methods and venues for those students who do not function well in a traditional school setting.

Perhaps it is time to place more attention and devote more energy to those who behave in class and respect their opportunity to learn and grow. It is not the top students who need our focus. They are in the advanced classes with others who want to learn and respect an academic atmosphere and they will do just fine. It is the middle of the road students who are hurt most by the disrespect and disruption of the four or five students in each class who choose not to respect structure and order and discipline. We need to advocate for the students who do behave and honor their right to a quality education.

None of this means that we ignore the needs of our students at risk. Most educators have a strong desire to help all students become successful, happy and productive members of society. We have poured a huge amount of energy and financial resources towards that objective but the plain and simple truth is that what we are doing is not working. This is not an indictment of education or of society in general, but a call to action by everyone to work together to resolve the issue. If nothing changes, nothing changes.

A single article is not going to scratch the surface of our educational challenges, but I invite you to think about two things. First and foremost, and a top priority, is to determine what to do with the disruptive and even violent students in our current settings.

Teachers have a passion for teaching and learning but are frustrated by having to put up with constant disruption with seemingly no support. You as educational leaders have to work with teachers to develop clear and concise discipline policies with equally clear and concise consequences for students who stand in the way of other's opportunity to learn. It is imperative that teachers document and report disruptions consistently. If students push the envelope on a regular basis but are not quite to the point of being removed from class, that needs to be documented by every teacher. Students are rarely disruptive in just one class but show patterns of disrespect. All teachers documenting the minor but repeated disruptions of individual students would support disciplinary intervention from counselors and APs. That would take a huge burden off of the teachers and afford them the opportunity to do what they love to do -- teach.

We can address alternatives in another article, but let's reflect on this for a moment. For most students, brick and mortar schools with rows of desks and traditional teaching methods are wonderful. Most educators fit that mold. But we really need to look for alternative educational venues and curriculums for those who will perhaps never succeed in a traditional setting. It would benefit all students.

As we begin a new school year we can apply a little of Henry Ford's philosophy. When he told his engineers to develop a V-8 engine they told him it was impossible. He answered, "You don't understand. I want you to design a V-8 engine." After working on the project for six months the engineers echoed that it was an impossible undertaking. Henry repeated, "You don't understand. I want you to design a V-8 engine." The V-8 engine became a reality.

By making student behavior one of your school’s top priorities, good student behavior, quiet and well ordered classrooms and the academic excellence you aspire to will become a reality.

Denny Smith is a former teacher and coach, a motivational speaker, and author committed to making our schools and communities safe and welcoming for all people. More information is available at www.dennysmith.com or email denny@dennysmith.com.
Thank you to all of our MASA mentors for 2015-16!

Bill Adams, Superintendent, Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton
Sheri Allen, Superintendent, Mankato
Ben Barton, Superintendent, Caledonia
Jim Behle, Retired Superintendent, St. Michael-Albertville
Kathy Belsheim, Superintendent, Ogilvie
Dan Bittman, Superintendent, Sauk Rapids-Rice Public
Tom Bruels, Superintendent, St. Clair
Jannell Bullard, Director of Special Education, MAWSECO
Paul Carlson, Superintendent, New London-Spicer
Cliff Carmody, Executive Director, SW/WC Service Cooperative
John Engelking, Superintendent, Proctor
Linda Gardner, Director of Special Services, Hopkins
Beth Giese, Superintendent, Cannon Falls
Wayne Gilman, Retired Superintendent, Pine City
Matt Grose, Superintendent, Deer River
Larry Guggisberg, Superintendent, Roseau
Ed Harris, Superintendent, Chatfield
Deb Henton, Superintendent, North Branch
Bob Jaszcak, Superintendent, Kittson
Lynne Kovash, Superintendent, Moorhead
Tom Lee, Superintendent, Waseca
Jean Lubke, Executive Director, Equity Alliance MN
Kate Maguire, Superintendent, Osseo
Chris Mills, Superintendent, Stephen Argyle Central
Mike Munoz, Superintendent, Rochester
Jerry Ness, Superintendent, Fergus Falls
Ray Queener, Superintendent, Cambridge-Isanti
Nan Records, Regional Low Incidence Facilitator, Nat’l Joint Powers Alliance
Mike Redmond, Superintendent, Goodhue
Jeff Ronneberg, Superintendent, Spring Lake Park
Lisa Snyder, Superintendent, Lakeville
Deron Stender, Superintendent, Virginia Minnesota
Jason Ulbrich, Executive Director, Eagle Ridge Academy
Greg Vandal, Partner, PEER Solutions
Daron VanderHeiden, Superintendent, Hutchinson
Deb Wanek, Superintendent, Pelican Rapids
John Widvey, Retired Superintendent, Worthington

MASA Mentor-Mentee Year 2 Program Option

Thank you to all of our mentors for their great work in assuring that our newest MASA members have the support they need for successful practice in their first year. This is essential work - we know that if leaders experience success and support, they are far more likely to stay in their roles, and that sustained practice translates into student success.

Last year, MASA extended our mentor support to all MASA members in all MASA component groups. And this year, we are pleased to add a second year mentoring benefit.

The MASA Board has authorized mentoring arrangements to be extended, if conditions warrant, beyond the one-year mentoring arrangements.

An application requesting extended mentoring arrangements is required and must be submitted to the region coordinator of mentoring services.

A request for extended mentoring arrangements may be made by the Mentor, the Mentee, or by the Mentee’s School District. If approved by the region and the MASA staff, MASA will provide a $500 stipend to the region for this support.

You can request an application form for extended mentoring from your MASA Regional Leadership Team, which can be found at www.mnasa.org/regionleaders.
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Points of Engagement for Community Leaders

“What can I do?” may be the most important question you ask yourself in your lifetime. The second most important may be, “What else can I do?” In other words, what can I do beyond what I am doing now to make the world a better place for everyone? What can I do to close the learning and income gaps so that all people have an equal opportunity for success? These questions can be addressed through engagement in education – not only the education that takes place in our schools, but more importantly, the education that takes place in our homes and communities.

The question of our purpose—or what we can do—to improve our world was explored as long ago as the recording of ancient scripture; it was the inspiration for the best seller, “The Purpose Driven Life”; it is the theme of Justin Bieber’s “Purpose” tour. As human beings, the desire to make a difference seems hard-wired into us. However, in this age of unimaginable conveniences, massive consumerism, and the inundation of media, we often fail to look beyond our daily occupations and toward our collective futures. The truth is we all have the capacity to make the world better...for someone.

The Search Institute outlines 40 developmental external and internal assets that support the healthy development of adolescents. (See them all at search-institute.org.) Among those assets are the following:

- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighborhood
- Parent involvement in schooling
- Community values youth
- Service to others
- Adult role models
- Youth programs
- Creative activities
- Religious community

If you are wondering how to engage with learners or learning and where to start, following are some suggestions:

- Ask your local school board, superintendent, principal, teacher or parent teacher organization to describe the needs and opportunities for volunteers.
- Become active with local mentorship or befriender organizations (i.e. Big Brothers/Big Sisters).
- Initiate a book shelf or reading hour in an underserved neighborhood.
- Offer to tutor kids in skills or academics where you excel. Invite a parent to observe.
- Hold open tutoring, math, or reading sessions in the local library or other public place.
- Hold a monthly or quarterly neighborhood picnic or pizza party where kids and adults can participate in activities together and get to know each other.
- Begin a summer and/or afterschool program in which children can participate while parents gather in another area to hone their own skills and develop a social network.
- Hold local talent shows, music shows, art shows, etc. that encourage children's participation.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for youth of all ages to volunteer.

There is a role for everyone. Our children need you to be actively engaged in supporting learning through the opportunities you and your communities offer inside and outside of the school setting.
On behalf of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), welcome back to the start of another school year! Whether you are just beginning your career as a school administrator or are a seasoned veteran, the start of a new school year is always an exciting time filled with new opportunities and challenges. For those of you who are not familiar with CAREI, we are a research center that serves as the link between research and practice in Minnesota schools PreK-16 and other agencies interested in applied educational research. CAREI partners with local, state, and national service agencies and policy makers to improve outcomes for all learners. We have set an ambitious goal that we want our services to impact 80% of school districts within three years! The 2015-16 school year was an exciting year for CAREI! Here is a look back at what we accomplished “by the numbers”:

- 43 districts\(^1\) joined the CAREI Assembly
- 4 CAREI Assembly meetings were held with a 96% satisfaction rating.
- 175 people attended CAREI Assembly meetings in person.
- 60 people attended CAREI Assembly meetings via Webex.
- 1 Standards Based Grading Literature Review\(^2\) was written and disseminated to CAREI members.
- 1 math resource guide\(^3\) was developed and disseminated to CAREI members.
- 1 Statewide Needs Assessment\(^4\) on research, evaluation, and assessment was completed and disseminated statewide.
- 13 presentations were given to professional organizations about the importance of research, evaluation, and assessment.
- 8 Research Watch electronic newsletters were disseminated and opened 848 times throughout the year.
- 1 Twitter account (@CAREIUMN) created with 32 tweets.
- 10 CAREI affiliates\(^5\) were added.
- 2 bills were authored in the MN Legislature to provide funding for statewide technical assistance in the areas of research, evaluation, and assessment.
- 1 bill \#3275 (Dahle)\(^6\) received a hearing (also see: slides\(^7\) & one-pager\(^8\)).
- 14 new external sales projects were awarded.

### Statewide Needs

The basis for much of our work last year and moving into future years was the completion of a Statewide Needs Assessment focusing on research, evaluation, and assessment. A large percentage of survey respondents indicated their school’s or district’s capacity to effectively use data to guide educational decisions was fair or poor. Despite substantial motivations and efforts to use data, most educational systems in Minnesota lack the capacity to meet their own needs for data-based decision making. In addition, those who responded to the interviews and surveys consistently indicated a lack of resources and expertise to support their efforts. To truly leverage state and local investments, professional educators require infrastructure to build capacity and efficiencies to use data that improve educational outcomes. Historically, CARIE coordinated with educational agencies located in the twin cities metropolitan area. The proposed solution will expand the mission and accessibility of CAREI. It will provide resources to policy makers and educational agencies throughout the state; especially those in rural and high need communities who were historically underserved. CAREI will enable the use of evidence and data at all levels of the education system and foster high-value partnerships. It will provide services and resources to facilitate high quality research, evaluation, and assessment practices among its partners.

### The Importance of Evaluation in Education

One finding from the needs assessment was that 51% of administrators rated their capacity to evaluate policies and programs as poor. High-quality program evaluation was rated as infrequent due to lack of time (78%), inadequate staffing/expertise (63%), and cost (53%). Why is evaluating programs and policies so important? The answer is fairly simple – to determine whether the program or policy had the intended effect in order to guide decision-making. Large-scale evaluations in education help us improve policy. Smaller-scale evaluations at the local level help guide decision-making and allocation of resources based on outcome data. Learning how or why a policy or program does or does not work is central to program improvement.

These days, we have a tendency to want a quick turnaround on data to answer our questions. Most people want to conduct program evaluations quickly and with minimal expense. However, in education, quicker isn’t always better. We need to consider the logistics of the program to be studied and what we hope to learn. Many educational programs or frameworks are multi-faceted and complex and require several years of implementation before all of the components are fully implemented. In addition, sometimes new programs take time to achieve the desired outcomes. That means that we need to collect data, often from multiple sources, over an extended period of time. Yet, educators can be impatient. The field of education has a long history of “swinging

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What’s New at CAREI continued on page 28.
pendulums”—adopting new programs and practices one year and abandoning them after a year or two of implementation to move on the next “educational fad.” The result is that programs are not given enough time to demonstrate the intended results, and staff suffers from “initiative fatigue.”

What’s the solution to the swinging pendulum of initiatives? Program evaluation is often used as part of implementation science. Implementation science is the study of methods that influence the integration of evidence-based interventions into practice settings. Implementation science helps answer the following questions. Why do established programs lose effectiveness over days, weeks, or months? Why do tested programs sometimes exhibit unintended effects when transferred to a new setting? The real message around implementation science is that effective intervention practices or models coupled with ineffective or inefficient implementation will result in ineffective, unsustainable program and outcomes! Implementation science focuses on stages of implementation over time and implementation “drivers” that provide the infrastructure needed for effective implementation that support high fidelity, effective, and sustainable programs.

CAREI uses an implementation science framework to assist districts in program evaluation efforts. Districts who belong to the CAREI District Assembly have access to four, high-quality professional development and networking sessions per year with either on-site or remote access. Along with discussing and disseminating applied educational research across a variety of important areas, we intend to focus on program evaluation in the upcoming year to build capacity within our member districts. For more information on CAREI or joining the CAREI District Assembly, please visit our new website at www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/. Please contact me at kgibbons@umn.edu if you want more information about CAREI or if you have certain topics you would like covered in future newsletters!

Related Links:
1. www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/assembly/member-districts.html
2. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_KVgYfYZyXydGGR1RF9pSEs1M28/view
3. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_KVgYfYZyXydGGR1RF9pSEs1M28/view
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School Start Time Roadmap

**Created for the Minnesota Association of School Administrators**

Many schools in Minnesota have moved from whether a later high school start time is indicated to how this can be implemented. The empirical research of Kyla Wahlstrom Ph.D. from the CAREI Center at the University of Minnesota is well-known to educators nationally. Reliable evidence links the 8:30 AM and later high school start time to decreased teen car crashes, decreased depression and improved academic performance.

The insight of Dr. Wahlstrom has identified these three areas closest to the hearts of teen parents. Translating Dr. Wahlstrom’s work into change in schools has been the work of many over the past several years. This translation recognizes that each school lies upon a readiness for change continuum. Readiness for change is multifactorial. Factors include the tolerance of change in the larger community, willingness of superintendents to spend political capital, presence of support from medical and educational experts, as well as openness of parents to struggle and dialogue.

The motivation for change is unique in each community. Negative outcomes imagined by opponents to change are often not borne out in reality. Two groups often resisting change are parents of younger children and athletics enthusiasts. As Mark Twain said, “I’ve had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened.” Strategies for implementing change are reviewed here.

When the issue of school start times was first discussed, there was some consideration of advocating for state legislation that would enact an 8:30 AM or later start time for high schools. This was in part driven by knowledge of the experience in other states. For example, in Pulaski County, Arkansas the later school start time was initiated not by local school administrators but by the State Commissioner of the Department of Education. In conversation with Twin Cities school officials, it became clear that state-level action would disregard a core value of Minnesota school systems—local control. Recognizing local control while simultaneously encouraging a later school start time in as many high schools as possible, as quickly as possible, has been a creative tension. It has required the concurrent use of diverse strategies including education through use of a tool kit, leading discussions with parents, and working collaboratively with school administrators to help craft a message specific to local needs. The strategies for changing the start time are as diverse as the schools. This is in part due to the lack of research in measuring outcomes associated with a given strategy.

The MN Sleep Society School Start Time work group emphasizes a continuum of change model that begins with awareness supporting commitment leading to action whose ultimate fruition is leading others to move along the same continuum. A similar continuum is well known to schools. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) uses very similar language in its promotion of cultural pluralism that it calls “Awareness to Commitment to Action”. To facilitate movement along the continuum the MN Sleep Society work group is creating a Tool Kit. The Tool Kit is a valuable resource especially when encountering someone early in the continuum of change known as precontemplation. It provides foundational resources when encountering those who might endorse ineffective strategies such as trying harder to sleep or using caffeine to combat tiredness. Once these sometimes formidable cultural stumbling blocks have been patiently deconstructed, healthy science-based realities are there for the asking. One of the most powerful is none other than the Center for Disease Control arguably the most powerful voice of biomedical reason in America. The CDC’s own movement on the continuum was fostered by several of the members of the MN Sleep Society work group in 2014, leading the CDC to recommend that “…middle and high schools push back start times to 8:30 a.m. or later. Noting insufficient sleep is common among high school students and is associated with several health risks such as being overweight, drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and using drugs – as well as poor academic performance.”

The early action phase is known as preparation. In the preparation phase three groups come together: first, school officials, board members and teachers; second, parents and teens; and third, experts and medical providers. Early conversations with teachers from elementary, middle schools, and high schools can quickly address concerns. Teachers may be concerned about loss of time with their own young children. Experience speaks otherwise. Teachers with a later school start time can still adjust their schedule to complete work in the morning. Others follow the lead of their students and get more sleep. In practice, teachers have not substantially resisted this change. Listening sessions led by the school board are a creative strategy.

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**School Start Time continued on page 30.**
and poor psychomotor coordination, recent studies have revealed that sleep deprived athletes are injured more frequently. In one example injuries were four times more common in players reporting six hours of sleep than those getting nine\(^5\). Teens talking about their own experiences of insufficient sleep and its consequences provide a “report from the trenches” point of view that can move a group of listeners from disagreement about the finer details to action energized by empathy. In the Twin Cities experience the inclusion of local pediatricians provided validity. While regional sleep experts can be helpful, the history of trust that local pediatricians provide acts as a foundation for quick and sustained action. Minnesota pediatricians are supported by both the August 2014 American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement and the June 2016 American Medical Association Statement on School Start Times as well as the Minnesota Sleep Society. In the planning phase, transportation issues are addressed. There are plenty of examples of changes in transportation being cost neutral or better. In fact, cost savings as a result of increasing the number of busing tiers was “the most prominent benefit (and may have been the real driver for the change in some cases)\(^6\).

In time the listening sessions have gathered their information. Pros and cons have been weighed. Few things are more tedious than a process trapped in endless preparation phase. This is similar to a doctor ordering endless tests to be sure of a diagnosis while the patient is suffering from a debilitating disease for which effective treatments are known. In the end a leader should make a conscious public decision. This is called a go point by Michael Useem\(^7\). Dr. Chace Anderson, in his 2015 presentation to the Wayzata board, had the courage to recognize that the future has no time of 100% certainty and comfort\(^8\). The go point marks the transition from preparation to action. There has been enough success in the action phase in Minnesota to describe a timeline, with details in the Tool Kit and a summary provided as follows. Late spring through fall, a stakeholder group is formed and meetings are held. Several different scenarios should be drafted for the purpose of discussion. A recommendation is presented to the decision authority (the superintendent or the school board) by late November. In early December, the school board discusses the recommendation and/or alternative scenarios. A decision to shift/not shift the start time is made. Announcing the plan to change the school start time should be made swiftly as parents parents need to declare their amount of child care payroll deduction prior to the first of the year. The change is implemented in the fall of the upcoming school year.

Maintenance is the next step on the continuum. There is an insidious creep towards chaos to which the best of human nature stands in resistance. In the school start time ethic the creep comes in the form of apparently reasonable
requests for the addition of zero hour classes and before school practices. Once we have learned the consequences of insufficient sleep these requests should be granted as temporary solutions rather than ongoing commitments.

Some say that a tipping point is approaching. Over the past several years early adopters have helped prove the benefits of a later start time. A group ethic is within reach for MASA. Can we respect local school control and simultaneously reach a consensus go point? •

References


John Garcia, MD, authored this article on behalf of the Minnesota Sleep Society. Garcia is a pediatric sleep specialist at Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare in St. Paul.

Contact the Minnesota Sleep Society at secretary@mnsleep.net for more information.

Timeline For Implementing School Start Time Change

- Form Stakeholder Group and Meet to Discuss a Recommendation and Scenario Options
- Recommendation Presented to the Decision Authority
- Make a Decision
- Announce the Plan by December 31st to Change Start Time in Fall
- Ample Time Provided for Stakeholders (e.g. Parents, Teachers) to Adjust Work and Childcare Schedules
- Change School Start Time

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Results of tax referenda over time vary significantly from state to state for a variety of reasons. In any given year, however, upwards of 50% of all school referenda seeking operating money or bonding are unsuccessful. Some factors such as demographics, the economy, anti-tax politics and the presence of organized opposition are contributing factors and out of a district's control. Other factors, including harnessing research-based best practices and understanding how to capture and effectively use available data sets are mostly or fully within control of leadership and the school board. Below are 10 key research-based factors associated with unsuccessful referenda. And if you are wondering why not the “Top 10 Tips for Winning,” read on after going through the list below!

**Why School Referenda Fail…**

1. Lack of unanimity and support from school board
   Split school boards, factions of the school board working against the referendum or perceptions that the school board is not united and supportive negatively impact referenda. Split school boards give the uninformed within the community a reason to oppose.

2. Lack of alignment in ballot proposal
   Alignment in a school district’s ballot proposal has two dimensions: (1) how the new money is going to be used; and (2) the tax impact associated with the requested investment in the public schools. It is critically important that the school board and administration get both components of alignment right. One way to inform the decision about the ballot proposal is to use a well-designed scientific, random-sample survey.

3. Failure to demonstrate a compelling need and consequences (positive and negative) of the referendum
   Unlike political campaigns, in which voters can identify with party affiliation and perceptions about the past record and qualifications of the candidate, school referenda are reliant on information alone: (1) What is being proposed? (2) How will the money be used? (3) Why is it necessary; and (4) How much will it cost me? To convince voters to voluntarily raise their taxes to invest in public schools requires clear and compelling information. No voter should go to the polls uninformed.

4. Controversy, lack of trust or “climate” issues within the school district and between the school district and the community
   Contentious issues are part and parcel to the business of running a school district and more problematic in times of financial stress. It is incumbent on the school board, administration and staff to be mutually supportive, proactively anticipate and solve problems before they become unmanageable, initiate quality control systems and work to strengthen relationships internally and within the community to offset the negative impact of inevitable distractions.

5. Poor public relations, communications or hostile local media
   Research clearly demonstrates the importance on effective and ongoing communications and public engagement as a foundation from which to launch a successful referendum. Maintaining a respectful and positive relationship with local media is also linked to success over time.

6. Referendum conducted prematurely
   It takes the time it takes to get it right. Waiting until the school district is ready, with the prerequisite foundation in place, is best practice if the school board has the luxury of having a legitimate choice about moving forward now or waiting until the school district is better prepared and positioned for success.

7. Inadequate planning, execution and commitment of resources (time, talent and treasure) by school district
   Planning and execution of successful referenda are complex, challenging and dependent on good planning and commitment of human and financial resources. Coordination between the school district’s administration of the referendum and the advocacy work of the campaign committee is paramount.

8. Inadequate planning, execution and commitment resources (time, talent and treasure) by campaign committee
   Executing successful referenda is complex, challenging and dependent on good planning and the commitment of human and financial resources. Most successful school referenda are dependent upon a grassroots advocacy group organized to support the referendum proposal in coordination with the school district. Planning and executing a winning campaign requires commitment, expertise and

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**Why School Referenda Fail continued on page 35.**
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sufficient resources, particularly in the “Big Three.” (communications, canvassing and GOTV) Poor execution of GOTV, resulting in lower than optimal turnout of key voter targets, is often a contributing factor to defeat.

9. Demographics and socioeconomic factors

There are many demographic and socioeconomic factors that affect the outcome of referenda. Examples would include the age, education, affluence of the community or the number of public school families within the school district. The health of the economy and consumer confidence in the months leading up to a referendum not only influence the outcome, but also help the school district and campaign committee understand how steep the challenge is in terms of being successful on Election Day.

10. Critical or unexpected events

Factors totally outside of the control of the school district can occur and adversely affect the outcome of a referendum. These critical or unexpected events could range from a stock market crash, (“Black Monday”) to a critical international, national or local event (9/11) to efforts to torpedo the school district’s proposal by organized opposition.

So inquiring minds want to know…

Why emphasize these ten, research-based factors associated with unsuccessful school referenda rather than focusing on the positive in terms of the “Top 10 Tips for Winning” as referenced in the opening paragraph?

Two reasons: (1) First, while the professional literature is replete with such “how to” lists (including some I have authored!), the tips are often anecdotal rather than research-based, and they tend to be tactical (e.g., our teachers took out an advertisement in the local paper) rather than “big picture” strategic. (2) Second, experience over time has taught me that starting with broad factors associated with unsuccessful referenda motivates school leaders to process how each factor will our could influence a future referendum in their unique environment, and then to strategically plan to eliminate or minimize the potential negative impact of a given factor. The challenge and opportunity for school leaders is to understand and factor into the equation contextual factors (e.g., wealth, age, education level) not within the district’s control and then to act strategically on the mirror images of the factors listed above, developing a comprehensive referendum plan on a foundation of research and best practice.

Don E. Lifto, Ph.D., is a consultant with St. Paul-based, Springsted Incorporated, an independent municipal advisor serving school districts, cities, counties and non-profits. Prior to his work at Springsted, Lifto served as a superintendent for 25 years in rural, suburban and intermediate school districts. He is a co-author of two books on referendum planning, is a frequent presenter on referendum topics at AASA, NSBA and ASBO and has had more than a dozen articles published in national journals.
MA萨 Calendar

2016

October 1-2
MA萨 Board of Directors
Madden’s Conference
Center, Brainerd

October 2
MA萨 Great Start Cohort
MA萨 Golf Tournament
Madden’s Conference
Center, Brainerd

October 2-4
MA萨 Fall Conference
Madden’s Conference
Center, Brainerd

October 24
Executive Development
Committee
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

November 1
Legislative Committee
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

November 2
Nominating Committee
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

November 11-12
MN Aspiring Superintendents Academy
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

November 16
MA萨 Great Start Cohort
MA萨 New Leaders Cohort
Cragun’s Conference Center, Brainerd

MN November 16-18
Curriculum Leaders of MN/Technology Leaders of MN (CLM/TLM) Conference
Cragun’s Conference Center, Brainerd

November 21
Federal Advocacy Committee
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

December 7
MA萨 Board of Directors
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

2017

January 11
MA萨 Jobsite Renewal

January 11
MA萨 Great Start Cohort
MA萨 Offices, St. Paul

March 8
MA萨 Board of Directors
MA萨 Great Start Cohort
MA萨 Foundation Golf Tournament
Duluth, MN

October 1
Great Start Cohort
MA萨 Foundation Golf Tournament
Duluth, MN

October 2-3
MA萨 Fall Conference
Duluth, MN

September 30-October 1
MA萨 Board of Directors
Duluth, MN

October 1
Great Start Cohort
MA萨 Foundation Golf Tournament
Duluth, MN

August - TBD
MDE Back-to-School Conference