

# Thanksgiving in the Summer

by Ric Dressen,  
2004-05 MASA President and  
Superintendent,  
Alexandria Schools

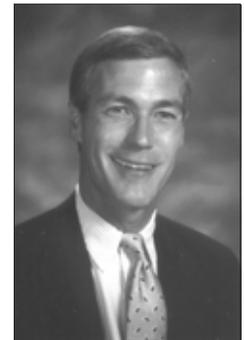
I like the Thanksgiving holiday in November. It's a good time at the end of the calendar year to reflect with family on all the good fortune that has occurred over the past months. Add turkey and gravy and, yes, I would declare it my favorite holiday.

As we come to the end of another school year, I would ask each of us to pause and have a "Thanksgiving moment" to reflect on all of our educational family's good fortune over the past year. My summer Thanksgiving list for MASA includes:

- **Executive Director Charlie Kyte:** I am thankful for Charlie's leadership in our Association. His energy, passion and ideas have helped to make MASA a premier educational organization in the state. In April, the Board of Directors unanimously approved a three-year contract extension to Charlie beginning July 1, 2006. The details of the contract will be formally addressed beginning late this summer.
- **MASA Staff:** Our MASA staff is amazing. They constantly respond to new challenges and advance the many initiatives and projects of MASA. They are a great team. In April, the Board of Directors unanimously approved having Charlie Kyte work with the staff to expand their duties and responsibilities and develop compensation packages that reflect these duties and responsibilities.

- **MASA Board of Directors:** I am thankful for our 2004-05 MASA Board of Directors that has shared their talents and skills throughout the year representing our Association and speaking out on behalf of children. No matter the time or situation, they were always responsive to requests made of them.
- **MASA/MASE Partnership Agreement:** I am thankful that MASA and MASE will continue our educational partnership for two more years. This long-time partnership is sure to be advanced with our new agreement.
- **MDE Connections:** I am thankful for MASA's connections with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Numerous MASA/MASE members have served on various committees and task forces. Numerous members have helped in problem solving various educational issues with MDE. I'm especially thankful for the outstanding leadership of Commissioner Alice Seagren.
- **MASA Legislative Efforts:** I am thankful for MASA's leadership efforts throughout the 2005 Session. This truly has been a team effort. Our legislative team has had a constant presence in St. Paul. Our partnership efforts with the Alliance for Student Achievement continues to be a success, and the grassroots efforts of our MASA members at the local level has been a key to our legislative success.
- **Federal Advocacy Efforts:** I am thankful for MASA's expanded involvement at the federal level in promoting public education. Our MASA Federal Advocacy

Committee has successfully expanded our involvement with AASA, Minnesota federal officials, and the U.S. Department of Education.



Ric Dressen

- **MASA Colleagues:** I am thankful for all of my MASA colleagues. Your leadership in our state and in your districts continues to positively impact education for all learners.
- **Minnesota Students:** I am thankful for our Minnesota students. They continue to be a positive ray of hope for our future. Their ability to learn and successfully overcome many of life's challenges is remarkable!

I hope you take time to have a "Thanksgiving moment" prior to the end of our school year. And, if you are having turkey and gravy with it, please let me know ... I'll join you!

Thanks for a great year, everyone. It has been a pleasure serving you as the 2004-05 MASA President. •

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## MASA Staff Takes on Greater Responsibilities



Charlie Kyte

by Charlie Kyte,  
MASA Executive  
Director

As MASA continues to grow as an organization, we have found it increasingly challenging to address all of the needs in front of us. Rather than adding another

level of management, the Executive Committee decided to ask the staff to take on a higher level of responsibility in each of their respective roles. This will allow the underlying work of the Association to continue even as the "Voice" of our Association continues to grow.

The MASA Executive Committee had considered the possibility of retaining a Deputy Executive Director to help run the Association. The committee felt that I could then spend greater amounts of time and energy representing our membership and public education in the media and at the legislature. Ultimately, the Executive Committee chose an alternative that will work out positively.

Mia Urick will take on the responsibility of additional conferences and workshops and will become the office manager. Mary Law will take over the responsibility for the publication of newsletters and coordination of communications. Stephanie Kastanos will handle conference registrations and the process of

obtaining legal reimbursements from AASA along with her regular accounting duties. Jeanna Quinn will become responsible for the coordination of major projects such as the MASA Day at the Capital and other events. She will retain responsibility of the MASA Jobsite Online, MASA membership and take a greater role in assisting with the organization of MASA's conferences.

MASA is blessed with having a very strong and effective group of staff members. With their willingness to take on added responsibilities, we will be able to meet the challenges of operating an efficient organization while continuing to expand our "Voice" as we speak on behalf of public education. •

## MASA Forges New Agreements with Other Statewide Associations

by Charlie Kyte,  
MASA Executive Director

MASA is committed to working closely with education associations in the state. We all recognize that working together serves public education better than each of the groups working individually.

**MASE/MASA Management Contract:** MASA and Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) have entered into a new management agreement to cover the 2005-2007 school years. Our two associations will work closely together and the MASA staff will provide services for the MASE Association. One significant change in this ongoing contract arrangement includes the MASA staff managing the MASE Fall Directors' Conference.

**MSBA/MASA:** The Minnesota School Boards Association

(MSBA) and MASA are working together to establish an 'Executive Coaching' program for new school system leaders. There is a huge turnover of school superintendents and both of our associations are committed to helping our new leaders be successful. We have developed an executive coaching program in which established leaders will work with the new superintendents.

**MASBO/MASA Lobbying Effort:** The Minnesota Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) has retained the services of the same lobby firm that serves MASA. In addition, all email alerts and information issued by MASA are also transmitted directly to MASBO, and in turn forwarded to MASBO members across the state. When issues of financial complexity arise at the legislature, MASA calls on skilled MASBO leaders to help with the

nuances of the proposed legislation.

**Education Minnesota/MASA B.R.I.D.G.E.S. Mediation Program:** The William Mitchell School of Law third year law students participating in the Alternative Dispute Resolution course have developed a process to resolve disputes between MASA members and union leaders. This Alternative Dispute Resolution model provides an informal and a formal methodology that will enable disputes, when they arise, to be resolved in a professional and respectful way. Training will begin this summer to help leaders of both organizations to know how to utilize this mediation model in each region of the state. •

## Leaders Forum

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The Leaders Forum is your newsletter and we welcome your input. Please send your ideas or articles to Mary Law at [mrlaw@mnasa.org](mailto:mrlaw@mnasa.org).



## Plan to attend the MASA 2005 Fall Conference

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Shaping public education is an awesome responsibility, a tremendous honor, and a satisfying pursuit. Join your colleagues this fall and explore the challenges and rewards of paving the future of education—in the best interest of kids! Watch your mail for registration materials, but mark your calendar today!

Registration materials will be mailed in early August and will also be available on the MASA web site ([www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org)).

**See you in Duluth!**



## Special Thanks to Our MASA/MASE Spring Conference Sponsors

A special thank you to our friends in business who sponsored portions of the 2005 MASA/MASE Spring Conference. Your participation means MASA and MASE are able to offer a higher quality conference and participants' professional development is enhanced. You make a difference for Minnesota education!

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## Elk River Area School District LEEDS the Way with Minnesota's First Green Building

by Tom Laufenberg,  
Public Sector Sales Manager,  
Johnson Controls, Inc.

The Elk River Area School District is proving that high performance school buildings can create a better learning environment for students while saving money, reducing energy and water use, and protecting the environment.

Westwood Elementary is Minnesota's first building, and one of only four elementary schools in the nation, to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Through LEED, the U.S. Green Building Council recognizes buildings that meet the highest performance standards through environmentally conscious design, energy efficiency, resource conservation and excellent indoor air quality.

Westwood's ventilation system pumps fresh air in at floor level and exhausts it through ceiling vents. Air doesn't travel from room to room, cutting down on the spread of illnesses. "The comment I hear most often is that the air is different, it feels fresh," said Ron Bratlie, Director of Special Projects, Elk River Area School District. "The principal has even said that the students are better behaved and quieter; they seem more content because they can see outside."

Clean indoor air was especially important to the district because of problems in the past. The U.S. EPA is featuring Westwood in an informational video on the importance of schools that are safe, healthy and sustainable.

Outside views are available from virtually anywhere in the school, and natural daylight bathes nearly every corner of the building. Studies suggest use of daylight in schools results in better student attendance, more positive moods, and higher grades and test scores.

It's not uncommon for schools to spend more on energy than on

computers and textbooks combined, but operating costs at Westwood are less than half those of a school meeting the state's minimum energy code standards. The heating system uses warm air exhaust to heat incoming fresh air, without mixing the two. The lighting system automatically turns off some lights in the school on sunny days, when less artificial light is needed. These systems and others save the school an estimated \$45,000 a year in energy costs alone.

Low-flow urinals and faucets save an estimated 600,000 gallons of water each year – a reduction in water use of more than 30 percent.

Westwood cost no more to build than a standard school, and construction costs actually came in under budget. "Keeping within budget is our promise to district taxpayers. Providing excellent learning opportunities is our mission and our promise to

students. This project provides the environment to do both," says Bratlie.

The Westwood building opened in 2003 and is itself an educational tool featuring displays about the facility's environmental features. It also serves as a tangible example of Elk River's commitment to both student achievement and environmental responsibility. As Bratlie observes, "You can build a better building, you can improve the learning environment, and you can save energy at the same time."

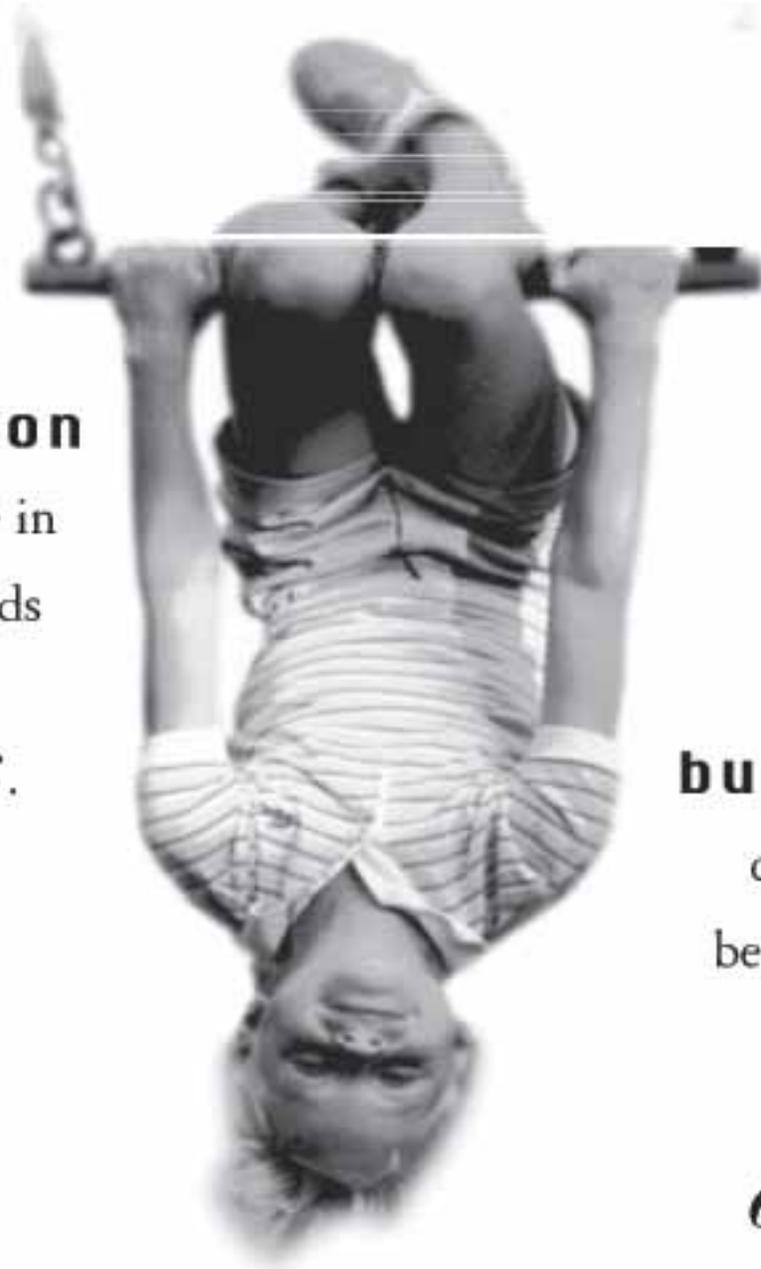
By partnering with Johnson Controls, Elk River has made great strides toward their mission of enabling high student achievement. Through effective program management, value-added design, guaranteed lower lifecycle costs, and increased efficiency, the partnership has improved the quality of the learning environment for both the short and long term.

•



*Westwood Elementary, Elk River Area School District*

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## Bits 'n Pieces Summer 2005



Shari Prest

by Shari Prest,  
Ark Associates

### Just the Facts School Choice

- NAEP data shows that the longer a charter school is open, the lower it scores.
- 150,000 students across the state

select alternative and charter school options for their educations.

- Charters that constitute their own school district – and thus have more autonomy – do not score as well as charters that are a part of a public school district. – NAEP 2003
- The attrition rate is much higher in charter schools than in regular public schools – *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2005

### Taxes

- A declining commitment to education is not some blip to be recouped easily in coming years; it reflects an accelerating trend in the state. During the most recent five-year period for which national data is available, 1997 to 2002, Minnesota's rate of growth in per-pupil spending ranked 45th in the country (46th if D.C. is included). – Britt Robson, *City Pages*, January 12, 2005
- The state of Iowa entertained an initiative to make the state a tax haven to help it attract and maintain young professionals but learned that “[lower]taxes were not really what it was all about.” – *Star Tribune*, March 28, 2005
- “The administration should acknowledge that the state does have a revenue problem and cease this myth that all problems are on the spending side.” – former Governor Arne Carlson, April 8, 2005

### School Funding

- About three dozen studies completed in 17 states found that basic education, not including

special education and ELL, costs an average of \$8758 per student per year, as reported in *Education Week*. Minnesota provides about \$5300 per student before those extras. – Fred Storti, *MESPA Advocate*

- MDE released information about increases in education funding. The information appears accurate but misleading. Within the press releases, the total percentages of funding increases are identified for a 2-year period. These amounts have to be divided by 2 to reflect the funding change for a single year. Further, the second year increases are highly dependent on local tax levies being instituted.
- Superintendent salaries and management are definite factors in assessing and predicting school performance, according to a report released by the Texas Educational Excellence Project (TEEP) at Texas A&M University.

### Parenting

- The National Institute of Media and the Family website provides helpful tools for parents and educators to determine the appropriateness of movies, videos, DVDs, video games, and TV shows for kids of all ages. Go to [www.mediafamily.org](http://www.mediafamily.org) and explore *KidScore* and *Facts and Tips*.
- Since the 1950s, more than 1,000 studies have been done on the effects of violence in television and movies. The majority of these studies conclude that children who watch significant amounts of television and movie violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, attitudes and values. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 1999.

### Red Flags

- [Taxpayers'] League president David Strom said he had not planned on a rally this year until he was contacted by the governor's office early this month

and asked to plan one. – *Star Tribune*, Capitol Report, April 16, 2005

- When the past five years are viewed as a whole, principals and assistant principals are making about 3.2% less this year, on average, than they did five years ago when the cost of living is taken into account.
- Nationally, average salaries paid to superintendents actually decreased 0.5% between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 according to *District Administration* fourth annual salary report.

### Bragging Rights

- The number of Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) high scorers (650 or better) has continued to increase over the past two decades. In twenty years, the percent of high scorers has risen from 3% to 4% in math, and from 4% to 14% in verbal skills. (All percentages are taken from scores on the original scale.)
- Minnesota is the number one state in the nation in highest percentage of residents with a high school diploma, and has moved into the top 10 in its share of adults with college degrees. —U.S. Census Bureau
- Nationally, Average verbal SAT scores have risen 5 points since 1994, and average math SAT scores have risen 15 points since 1990. – National School Boards Association

### Quotes and Quotables

#### Character

- “The truth heals for much longer than it stings.” – Naomi Tutu

#### Leadership

- Scott Waddle was commander of the submarine U.S.S. Greenville when it incorrectly surfaced below a Japanese fishing vessel resulting in the loss of Japanese lives. Some of the lessons he has learned from mentors before and after the

**Bits 'n Pieces continued on page 7**

# Bits 'n Pieces...

## Continued from Page 6

tragic accident include:

1. "Get up, get back, get down, get dirty." – in other words get involved.
2. If the boss isn't having fun, you can bet those working for the boss aren't either.
3. Lead by example.
4. Invoke exacting standards.
5. Listen.
6. Communicate effectively and with a sense of purpose and meaning.
7. Foster a climate of trust.
8. Build up your people.
9. Improve the quality of life for those you lead.
10. Be accountable for your actions.

### Progress

- "I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I'm frightened of the old ones." John Cage
- "The only way forward was the telling and the hearing of the truth – of what we had been and what we had become." Naomi Tutu
- "While you're always, always loved, you're never, never entitled." – Tim Russert

### Education

- "We can only wonder about today's youth. They love luxury, show disrespect for authority and prefer laughter over education. They contradict their parents, babble in front of company, wolf down their food, and tyrannize their teachers." – Socrates
- "When it comes to [school] choice, Minnesota and Twin Cities school districts are among the leaders in the nation." – *Star Tribune*,
- "Today's buzzwords for secondary students involve a different set of three R's – rigor, relevance and relationships." – Robert Schmidt, Executive Director of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals.
- "Education, is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." – William Butler Yeats
- "Minnesota schools have been among the best in the nation, but now they face funding problems that compromise the quality of

education." – Jill Eikenhorst; high school senior, *Star Tribune*, April 10, 2005

- "We have placed too much confidence in school reforms that affected only six hours a day in a child's life...in the face of many negative influences on our children that come from outside the school, we have done well to maintain our high school completion rate and our level of performance on achievement measures...We have foolishly concluded that any problems with levels of academic achievement have been caused by faulty schools staffed by inept teachers." – Terrall Bell, author of "A Nation at Risk, reflecting 10 years after the fact."
- "In today's society, all American youth must be prepared for some form of postsecondary education." – Denise Johnson, *Star Tribune*, March 20, 2005
- "All of these schools [reform models] are organized around three powerful principles: give students a challenging curriculum that prepares them for college or work; relate course work to student lives and goals, and surround students with adults who push them to achieve." Bill Gates, Chairman and founder of

Microsoft, *Star Tribune*, March 20, 2005

- "Learning is a treasure which accompanies its owner everywhere." – Chinese proverb

### Across the Aisles

- "Regardless of political persuasion, we want our governor and legislature to truly succeed because their success translates not only into our success but, more important, success for our children. This has always been the virtue of Minnesota – its commitment to tomorrow. The budget is central to this commitment and should be seen as a financial expression of our vision." – former Governor Arne Carlson

### Red Flags

- Nearly 50% of Minnesota kindergartners are not fully proficient in the skills necessary for school success. – *United Way Success By 6*
- Approximately 80% of Minnesota's children under 5 are in regular, non-parental childcare each week. – *United Way Success By 6*
- Only 20% of childcare centers are rated developmentally positive. – *United Way Success By 6*

**Laughter Facts!** (taken from Stevie Ray's, "Making it up as we go since 1989.")

- Laughter transfers information from short-term to long-term memory.
- Laughter increases creative thinking.
- Laughter gets to the heart of teamwork.
- Laughter increases productivity by reducing stress, improving information flow, and improving health.
- Laughter establishes command of a room.
- 

# Have you renewed your membership?

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

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## Minneapolis Foundation Funds Superintendent's Symposium



by **Charlie Kyte**,  
MASA Executive Director

A grant from the Minneapolis Foundation has enabled 25 superintendents from across the state to come together in a “think tank” symposium to discuss the major issues facing public education in Minnesota. The symposium group will have created several position papers by

*Charlie Kyte*

the end of June that will help those in leadership roles of education, to guide our school districts in a way that

positively impacts the lives of our children.

MASA thanks St. Paul Superintendent Patricia Harvey for helping to inspire this idea. Under the skilled facilitation of Peter Hutchinson, former Minneapolis Superintendent, the group is identifying how public education must be positioned to serve the needs of our families and retain the faith and trust of our communities. The symposium group will meet four times in the Twin Cities, is engaged in selective readings and has formed work groups to work on individual initiatives.

Watch for an announcement of the work from the ‘Superintendent’s Symposium’ as it is released this summer. •

### ***Are You Moving?***

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



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## Retiree Health Insurance Benefits - Cause for a Strike??

by Gloria Blaine Olson,  
The School District Law Group  
of Kennedy & Graven

What causes strikes by public employees? Of course, there is not a single reason or a simple explanation for a strike. Each strike involves its own unique and complex set of circumstances, leading to the union's exercise of its ultimate economic weapon. Each strike is a "perfect storm" or perhaps, more accurately, a completely "imperfect storm."

Most often, we think of salary and benefits for active employees as the terms and conditions of employment that lead to strikes. School administrators involved in collective bargaining with school district employee unions know that salary and active employee benefits are the most difficult terms to settle and normally are left for the final stage of bargaining.

Two public employee strikes during the last year received significant media attention—the Metro Transit Workers and the Crosby-Ironton teachers. Media coverage of both strikes lead to the conclusion that retiree health benefits were an important, perhaps the most important, issue leading to the strike.

The Metropolitan Council and the Metro Transit Workers (represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005) finalized a two-year contract in April, 2004. This contract was described in an MTC release as follows: "Eliminated retiree health benefits for new hires and changed Metro Transit's contribution from a fixed percentage of the premium to a defined dollar amount for current employees when they retire. These changes reduced the

agency's \$255 million liability by about \$27 million and eventually eliminated this enormously costly benefit."

The Crosby-Ironton 2001-03 teachers' contract required the school district to fully fund family health insurance benefits for retirees for nine years after retirement or until the teacher dies. In 2005, this was an annual benefit per retiree of approximately \$13,000. (Active employees received a lesser district paid family benefit ([extract\_itex]7,650]) than the retirees.) There was no limit on the district's obligation to fund the full family retiree benefit even if premium costs rose substantially in the future. A significant number of the Crosby-Ironton teachers were at or near the TRA Rule of 90, creating an unsustainable financial burden for the School District. After a 39-day strike, the parties ratified an agreement on April 6, 2005. Retiree benefits were modified substantially.

The 2003-05 and 2005-07 contracts eliminated the school district's responsibility to directly pay insurance premiums for retirees. Instead, the school district is responsible for making payments to a VEBA at a specified dollar amount from the years 2005 to 2019. The VEBA Trust will pay retiree benefits pursuant to its terms for eligible teachers who were hired prior to 1990 and retire after 2004. The school district's only obligation is to make the specified payments to the VEBA Trust. The district does not guarantee any specific level of benefit for any specified period of time to these retirees. Teachers hired between 1990 and 2005 do not participate in the VEBA, and receive an annual[/extract\_itex]1,000 to[/extract\_itex]1,500 district contribution to a health care savings plan. Teachers hired

after July, 2005 will not receive any district-paid health benefit upon retirement or contribution to a health savings plan. The resulting advantages of this settlement to the district include:

- 1) Significant reduction of district's financial obligation for retiree health insurance benefits.
- 2) Certainty and predictability of the school district's financial obligation in the short and long term.
- 3) Elimination of guaranteed level of benefits or duration of benefits by the district.
- 4) Elimination of any retiree health insurance benefit for new hires.

The issue of retiree health insurance is even more critical now that a Minnesota Supreme Court decision held that public employees vest in the contractual retiree health insurance benefits in effect when they retire, and the public employer cannot thereafter reduce or limit such benefit.

These two recent strikes and the new Minnesota Supreme Court case should encourage school districts and administrators to carefully review any collective bargaining agreement's provisions for retiree health insurance and other severance and post-employment benefits. The short term and long term financial implications should be carefully analyzed. Employees and their union representatives should be educated about these matters. Options and strategies for control and reduction of benefits, if appropriate and necessary, should be developed. Finally, school districts and their employee representatives need to work together and negotiate responsible, affordable and reasonable solutions. •

## The Work of the MASA Legislative Committee

by Gary Prest  
Superintendent, Bloomington Schools and  
2005 MASA Legislative Committee Chair

While the outcome of legislative and gubernatorial deliberations is unclear as of this writing, it is clear that MASA has become the "go-to source" for information and guidance by many legislators. In addition, the Minnesota Department of Education has come to rely on MASA for technical expertise across a wide range of issues. A careful reading of the Education Omnibus bills, in both the House and the Senate, and of the Governor's education proposal reveals numerous links to the MASA 2005 Legislative Platform. This has not occurred through happenstance, but rather through the thoughtful and persistent efforts of many.

MASA Executive Director Charlie Kyte has led the charge in St. Paul with unrelenting enthusiasm and a belief that good things come to all who advocate unceasingly for the education of the next generation. MASA Lobbyist Ray Frost, Ewald Consulting, is highly respected by both sides of the aisle and insures access for advancement of MASA positions. And the MASA Legislative Committee has done an outstanding job during the 2005 Legislative Session. Composed of thirty-four hard-working members representing the nine MASA regions, the committee started

early and strong, drafting a legislative platform that was widely distributed to legislators and members. The platform became the focus of numerous discussions leading to bills and amendments which eventually found their way to the conference committees of the state legislature.

Over the past several months, the MASA Legislative Committee, working with MASA staff, held a press conference on taxation and facilitated MASA Day at the Capitol. Small teams of the committee met throughout the session with legislative leaders, members of the Governor's office, the Governor and key personnel of the Minnesota Department of Education including Commissioner Alice Seagren. Committee members were on call to testify during key education discussions and many rose to the occasion.

MASA has had a positive presence and influence during the 2005 legislative session. Important educational issues are now "on the table" that had been set aside in earlier sessions and MASA is "at the table." While the outcome of this session is unclear as of this writing, it is clear that MASA must continue to be a strong voice for public education in Minnesota and that members of the MASA Legislative Committee will play a critical role transforming words into action. •



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## Executive Development Committee Update

by Tom Westerhaus  
Superintendent, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools and  
2005 MASA Executive Committee Chair

This year's MASA Executive Development Committee has seen its role as more vital than ever in helping members navigate through increasingly troubled waters. School shootings and violence (actual and threatened), assessment fever fueled by No Child Left Behind, evaporated funding streams that dry up programs and personnel, and a "public education as fair game" mentality in the media and legislative corridors, all converge at district leaders doorways and leave them in a constant state of disequilibrium.

In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Michael Fullan said "The litmus test of all leadership is whether it mobilizes people's commitment to putting their energy into actions designed to improve things." Actually, in this rough and tumble administrative world, I find I can better relate to Fullan's definition of leadership as simply "causing more good things to happen and fewer bad things to happen." Some of his good things are "enhanced student performance, increased capacity of teachers, greater involvement of parents and community members, engagement of students, all-around satisfaction and enthusiasm about going further, and greater pride for all in the system." A reduction of bad things, according to Fullan, would see "fewer aborted change efforts; less demoralization of employees; fewer examples of piecemeal, uncoordinated reform; and a lot less wasted effort and resources."

Easy task, right? Not according to the Executive Development Committee members gathered around the table at our various meetings at MASA offices this year.

Two MASA action goals for 2004-05 were "continue to strengthen the role of MASA as a premier organization speaking on behalf of children and as a respected leader for public education," and "continue to build the MASA leadership network to assist and support." As members of the Executive Development Committee shared their individual stories this year, it became increasingly apparent that the MASA action goals meant finding ways to help leaders, when back home in their districts, promote a long-held but currently unfashionable belief in the vital role that public education plays in building a high quality of life for citizens. To that end, we formulated and supported the fall and spring conference themes of "Shaping Public Education in the Best Interest of Kids," and "The Essential Link: Learning and the Quality of Life."

The committee also identified key leadership skills it felt were necessary for MASA members in this time of intense change and the multiplicity of voices. Some skills

identified include: ability to scan the future and share the vision; communication skills that encourage development and delivery of the message of the vital role of public education; ability to develop and access partnerships and positive relationship-building; leading by example through modeling of strong leadership ethics and principles; succeeding in the political arena by reading and responding to the political landscape; and directing of data-driven continuous improvement for school district planning and goal development.

Which skills to focus on and where we as an MASA organization will take professional development in the coming year remains to be seen. The demands of the job of the 21<sup>st</sup> century public school leader, complex as the position has become, dictate new pathways and opportunities for executive leadership that encompasses the value of public education.

Fullan says, "All this complexity keeps people on the edge of chaos." But he also asserts that it is important to be on the edge of chaos, since "that is where creativity resides." Our challenge for future Executive Development Committees, and for all members, is to keep such creativity front and center as we seek better ways to both lead in our districts and truly shape public education in these times of tremendous upheaval. •



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## Voter Data

The large turnout of superintendents and school board members to hear Bill Morris speak on referendum planning in January indicates there will be a large number of referendums in 2005. Dr. Morris discussed the need to have organized listings of voters and commented positively about the efforts of SchoolFinances.com to provide voter listings to school districts.

For election planning, districts should secure a voter listing that includes whether the individual voted in the 2004 general election, 2004 Primary election, and 2002 General Election. SchoolFinances.com can provide this data to districts in EXCEL files. With your district data in EXCEL, the lists may be sorted by name, address or precinct. The list can be easily copied and shared in this format.

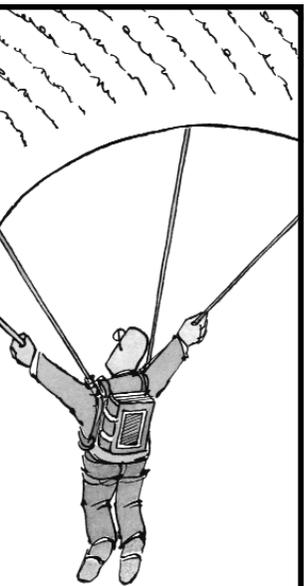
SchoolFinances.com can also merge a listing of staff, parents, and PTSA, if provided by the school district. The first name and telephone numbers of individuals must be on this list.

To receive a copy of our 2005 Election System with costs or to learn more, please contact Jim Sheehan at 952-435-0990, or jim@schoolfinances.com or Ann Thomas at 952-435-0955 or ann@schoolfinances.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The hiring season will soon be heating up. Let the Jobsite help you fill those positions with "bright new members for your brilliant school district team!" •

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Minnesota Schools Jobsite Online is an effective, inexpensive way for school districts to advertise job openings on the internet. Districts can post unlimited vacancies, for all levels of positions, for a small annual fee. People looking for positions can browse those jobs at no cost.

The Jobsite's applicant site streamlines the hiring process for both school districts and applicants. Applicants for licensed positions complete an online screening form that member districts can use to electronically screen applicants according to their own criteria.

Applicants may post their credentials (transcripts, license, letters of recommendation, etc.) to the site.

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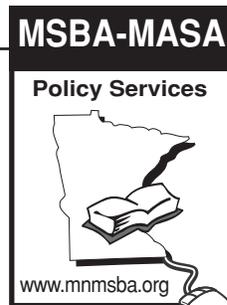
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## The Results are In—Congratulations to Elected Leaders!



*Kathy Leedom*

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

begin their terms of service.

**President-Elect:** Kathy Leedom, Willmar

**Treasurer:** Wendy Shannon, Byron

**Board Members:**

- Region 2—Les Martisko, South Central Service Coop
- Region 5—John Franzoia, Royalton
- Region 7—David Bottem, Barnum
- Region 9—Lezlie P. Olson, MN River Valley Special Education Coop
- Region 9—Jane Sigford, Wayzata
- Urban Districts—Joann Knuth, St. Paul

**2005-06 Committee Chairs:**

*Legislative Committee*

Joann Knuth, St. Paul

*Executive Development Committee*

Kelly Smith, Belle Plaine

*Member Services Committee*

Percy Lingen, Pequot Lakes

*Nominating Committee (Co-Chairs)*

Denny Carlson, Anoka-Hennepin

Kent Baldry, Pelican Rapids

*Federal Advocacy (Co-Chairs)*

Patty Phillips, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale

Jerry Williams, Rochester

**Minnesota Representatives to the AASA Governing Board**

Don Helmstetter, Spring Lake Park

Jerry Jensen, Lake City

Mike Kremer, Hopkins (*re-elected*)

Jim Redfield, Rush City (*re-elected*)

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

**Did you know that the MASA web site has hot links to a wide variety of state and national education associations? Visit us at [www.mnasa.org](http://www.mnasa.org)!**

**Did you know that the MASA Foundation Silent Auction raised \$2,770 at the MASA/MASE Spring Conference? Thanks to all who participated !**

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# Reflections On My First Year As a Superintendent

by Karen Orcutt  
Superintendent, Orono Schools

If you want to find true meaning in your life, become a superintendent of schools. During my first year as superintendent I became aware of how much I am challenged to find purpose at the core of the work I believe in. Perspective and purpose must be part of my thinking at all times. The politics of interaction and communication are constant in this role. The politics of it all could draw you away from your purpose. There is a constant hope in our job that through schools children will have better lives. It is the success of our students that creates purpose and meaning in our work. I am amazed at the constant obstacles that could get in the way of this purpose and meaning.

I have made mistakes. I am always aware that the way we respond to obstacles or failures is important to our lives and to our work. In this new role, the manner in which I respond to mistakes will also affect the people around me. It could affect the success of students. Without doubt, how I respond to challenges will affect the future of our district. This is important work with huge implications for the future of our children and for other educational leaders.

I have endured stress. The ability to endure obstacles, failure or setbacks and the ability to tolerate intense stress

may be some of the most critical elements to the role of a superintendent. The ability to be resilient has increased in importance as educational work environments become more complex and fast paced. The superintendency is a changing role. We often realize the complexity of situations coming at us. Issues facing schools today are complex and even though we realize the complexity as superintendents, we must always be cognizant and reflective on how our actions might affect others.

I have learned so much and continue to learn on a daily basis. The role of a superintendent is increasingly complex. Educational institutions face more difficult stressors and challenges over time. In order to survive and enjoy this position I need a variety of coping skills. I need to draw upon moral courage. I need to stay focused and maintain my values. However, I must also understand the values of the institution and to be aware of the relationship between the two. Both perspective and purpose must be part of my thinking.

I have enjoyed the challenge. As I put closure to this first year, I applaud myself for my survival, but more, I applaud all educational leaders and I say to us, we have found true meaning in our life through our work. It is the success of our students that creates purpose and meaning in our work. For this we are fortunate no matter how complex our work becomes. •



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# Calendar 2005-2006

July 1 and 4  
**Summer Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

July 12  
**MASA Foundation Board Meeting**  
 MASA Offices, St. Paul

July 19-20  
**Great Start Workshop I**  
 The Venue @ Galtier, St. Paul

August 12  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

August 17  
**Great Start Workshop II & Year 2 Cohort**  
 HolidayInn RiverCentre Hotel, St. Paul

August 18  
**MDE Superintendent Conference**  
 RiverCentre, St. Paul

September 5  
**Labor Day Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

November 11  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

November 16-18  
**Conference: Connecting to Curriculum**  
 Cragun's, Brainerd

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

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

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

**2006 ...**

January 2  
**Winter Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

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

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

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

February 10  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

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

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

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

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

April 14  
**Spring Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

May 12  
**Newsletter Submissions Due**

May 29  
**Spring Holiday**  
 MASA Offices Closed

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