



Minnesota Administrators
for Special Education

IMPACT

1884 Como Avenue • St. Paul, MN 55108 • (651) 645-6272 • members@mnasa.org

Winter 2021

Winter Greetings!

Greetings, MASE Members!

As we continue to navigate leading during these uncertain and complex times, I am humbled and grateful to work alongside so many of you who are working above and beyond survival mode to ensure we are meeting the needs of all students. I want to take a moment to celebrate the services, support, and programming you are providing to students, staff, and families across the state of Minnesota in both traditional and new and innovative ways!

I thought I would try something new for my quarterly newsletter article this time around. [Click here](#) to watch a brief video message from me, yours truly. Note: If you would like a written copy of Nicole Woodward's beautifully written "Letter to Educators" featured in my message, [click here](#).

Thank you for all you do!

With a grateful heart,

Your MASE President ●



Jamie Nord
Executive Director
St. Croix River Education
District
2021-22 MASE President



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Special thanks to our 2021-22 MASE Business Partners!

The MASE Business Partnership program strengthens the ties between MASE members and their collaborative partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Our goal is to advance the field of special education and improve student outcomes with an emphasis on proven, evidence-based practices.

Platinum Business Partner Membership

Creatively Focused, LLC.

eLuma Online Therapy

Family Achievement Center, Inc. (Related Service Provider)

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Integrative Therapy

Invision Services, Inc.

Pemberton Law, PLLP

STAR Autism Support, INC

University of St. Thomas Department of Special Education

I've always wanted to start a newsletter article with: "Damned if you do...damned if you don't!" Especially apropos in this time of mask/no mask controversy. I immediately thought of the special education director's life, pre-COVID. Our most "damned" issue was whether to agree to a parent request and you could still be challenged for not denying the request and going to due process. Now, for many of us, we can add masking..Yikes!

I started on this newsletter article approximately three weeks ago. I figured, why not get an early start? The biggest news that I had to share at the time was that Cherie Johnson was to be named as the CASE Special Education Administrator of the Year, a recognition that illustrates that Minnesota has some of the finest special education administrators in the country. In 2018 our very own Jill Skarvold also received that honor. In 2006 Nan Records was the recipient and going back to 2002, Bob Fisher was recognized. Way to go Minnesota!

Well, you now know what I have long suspected: our MASE leadership team, Mia Urick included, are not to be trusted. That cabal knew as early as late June that at the CASE Annual Conference I was to be the recipient of the Harrie M. Selznick Distinguished Service Award. It was all about keeping Cherie's award secret and wouldn't it be grand if I attended the conference to witness Cherie receiving the award..blah, blah, blah. I had no clue and have to admit to having felt awfully smug about having successfully kept the secret...not knowing that there were two secrets. Heck...even my wife, my daughter and granddaughters knew about the award! Shame on the leadership team for ensnaring young children in their web of deceit.

What a remarkable pleasure to be recognized this fall for my body of work by both MASE with its Legacy Award and then CASE. I suspect many of you have similar feelings to mine. We're just doing our best to do the best for kiddos with disabilities and in my case to do the best for you who serve those students. Nothing remarkable about that, just the sort of thing that I am supposed to do. Credit for the award must go to Cherie Johnson

who, not surprisingly, also garnered another award on behalf of MASE. During the CASE conference, I was time after time reminded of the remarkable leadership of CASE. We are in great hands and if you are not currently a member of CASE, please correct that error in judgement.



John Klaber
MASE Executive Director

So what else is going on, you might ask? Slice has a schedule roughed in that will take us well into the spring. The legislative platform should be ready to be shared with members. Following the publications of the equity statement, jointly supported by EdMN, MSBA, MASA, MESPA, MASSP, MASBO and AMSD, I am hopeful that we will find other opportunities to collaborate with one or more of those organizations. We will continue to look broadly for opportunities to partner on behalf of our members and the students that they serve. The Finance Bootcamp Team will be meeting to plan support for our members. With Renae Ouillette moving out-of-state, we certainly could use an additional partner to share the load. If you or someone you know would make a good addition to the team, please reach out to me. We have also had the opportunity to visit with BOSA and made the case for additional support and skill development for principals as well as a general improvement in the preparation provided by the universities. I will be "looking for a few good men people" to assist in that endeavor, as well. I don't need to remind you what a critical link the principal is in the special education services structure.

Finally, I want to bid a fond farewell to Jeanna Vohnoutka who has retired, as of Thanksgiving, from the MASA/MASE office staff. She was always a skilled and thoroughly charming person with whom to engage in the work of supporting our members. Never a task too great or an

Executive View continued on page 4.

MASE IMPACT
Winter 2021

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Executive View from page 3.

opportunity to laugh missed. I also want to formally welcome the new MASA/MASE staff member, Lori Zimmerman, who brings years of experience in public education to her new role.

It also goes without saying that we wish Deb Henton, Executive Director of MASA, and her family all the best as they move forward from the unexpected death of her son, Nick, caused by undiagnosed health issues. Our thoughts and prayers are with Deb, her husband, her son's wife and their four young children. I expect that the holiday season will be particularly challenging this year and I want our dear colleague Deb to know that we are there for her.

I had hoped that by this time I would not still be using the phrase: "Stay Well" to close my communications with others. Unfortunately, it is as true now as a year ago. So, please stay well and make sure to take time for yourselves and your dear ones. ●

Save the Date!
2022 MASA/MASE
Spring Conference

March 10-11, 2022

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest

Brooklyn Park, MN

John Klaber Receives CASE Distinguished Service Award

As part of the 2021 Annual Fall Conference and Board of Directors Meeting, November 10-13, 2021, in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) has recognized John Klaber, Executive Director for the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE), as the Harrie M. Selznick Distinguished Service Award.

The Harrie M. Selznick Distinguished Service Award was instituted for recognition of individuals who have been career-long leaders in the administration of special education programs. The intended recipients of the award are individuals who have made significant contributions to the field over extended professional careers.

John Klaber's service to the field of education spans over four decades. He began his career in 1975 as a High School Teacher and Varsity Basketball Coach. John then moved through various roles including School Psychologist, School Administrator, Director of Human Resources, and Director of Special Education. In addition to being a career-long leader in the field of special education, John has also made significant contributions to CASE. John currently leads the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) as Executive Director, a role he has held since 2013. John has an unwavering commitment to the field of special education and the immense support of special educators and administrators. His calm and graceful approach has helped MASE build partnerships with legislators, superintendents, business managers, and parent advocates. John understands that change comes from a united voice devoted to a common purpose and mission.

John recognizes that quality special education teachers for our students must be a top priority and works with higher education and the MOE to continuously improve special education licensure. He is committed to educating administrators and was instrumental in creating a Special Education Finance Boot camp. John is a valued mentor to special education administrators throughout Minnesota and a devoted advocate at the local, state, and national levels.

Each year CASE honors their award winners at the annual Board of Directors Meeting and Social and

recognizes each of them at the opening General Session at the Annual Conference.

"We are incredibly honored to be able to recognize outstanding leaders in special education who work each day to make a difference", said Erin Maguire, CASE President. CASE was founded in 1951 by a group of passionate leaders in the field, and it is these same passionate leaders and advocates who continue to lead today. We are proud to recognize their accomplishments that positively impact the outcomes for individuals with disabilities. ●



2022 CASE Annual Fall Conference

November 10-12, 2022
Salt Lake City, UT
www.casecec.org



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Cheryl Johnson Named CASE Outstanding Administrator of Special Education

As part of the 2021 Annual Fall Conference and Board of Directors Meeting, November 10-13, 2021, in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) has recognized Cheryl Johnson as the CASE Outstanding Administrator of Special Education.

The Outstanding Administrator of Special Education Award recognized individuals making significant professional contributions to leadership behavior and field practice in the administration of programs for students with disabilities and/or who are gifted. Nominees for this award must have had ten (10) years of experience in the field of special education.

Cheryl Johnson, Executive Director of the Goodhue County Education District, is a talented and valued leader in her North Star State of Minnesota. Prior to her role as Executive Director, Cheryl served as Assistant Director of Special Education, Coordinator of Special Education, and Special Education Teacher. She is best known for her passion and dedication to students with disabilities and their caregivers, along with her active involvement in professional and community affairs.

Cheryl takes great pride in empowering and encouraging others. She has mentored a multitude of new school leaders, offering her wisdom in guiding schools, personnel, finance, and most importantly, the students with unique learning styles. Superintendents, administrators, and legislators in Minnesota frequently seek Cheryl's advice because of her expertise in effectively leading special education programs in public schools. Cheryl has made a tremendous impact in the six school districts that comprise her district. However, her reach clearly extends across the state of Minnesota, resulting in improved learning opportunities for students.

Each year CASE honors their award winners at the annual Board of Directors Meeting and Social and recognizes each of them at the opening General Session at the Annual Conference.

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CASE President. CASE was founded in 1951 by a group of passionate leaders in the field, and it is these same passionate leaders and advocates who continue to lead today. We are proud to recognize their accomplishments that positively impact the outcomes for individuals with disabilities. ●



www.exceptionalchildren.org/events

Save the Date!



MASE
Best Practices
May 11-13, 2022
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

FALL CONFERENCE

thank you

2021 Fall Fundraising a Success!

by Keith Erickson, Fundraising Subcommittee Co-Chair

It certainly was a tremendous feeling being able to hold a normal, in-person Fall Conference this year. This year also presented us with the ability to hold our usual fundraising activities in an effort to maintain our scholarship giving through the Stenswick-Benson Scholarship Fund. We wish to thank each and every member for their generosity in making our fundraising once again quite successful.

The Annual Fall MASE Raffle was held for the 3rd consecutive year and continues to be our major fundraising activity of the year. The 2021 Raffle net proceeds totaled \$6,612.87.

Proceeds from additional activities were:

- Wine Tasting: \$2,640.00
- Wine Grab Bag Sales: \$575.00
- Pick a Number Game: \$810.00

For a Grand Total of \$10,637.87

Other important items of note:

The coveted Wine Trophy went to area F-2.

Scott Masten won the ticket sales drawing, and

Jeff Jorgenson won the pick a number game.

Our sincere thanks to Madden's for sponsoring the pick a number game prize!

Heartfelt thanks to my Co-Chair, Chad Williams; the Stenswick-Benson Scholarship Committee Chair, Shannon Erickson; and our hard-working fundraising volunteers Alicia Jepsen, Charlene Myklebust, Barbara Jo Stahl, and Barbara Troolin.

It has been my pleasure to serve MASE and its members as the Fundraising Co-Chair for the past 8 years. I strongly believe in our fundraising efforts, which provide valuable scholarships and professional development opportunities to our membership and those seeking to advance in our field of Special Education. The end of the 2021-2022 school year will represent the end of my 37th year of MASE membership. Although I will continue to be a MASE Retiree member, I believe it is time for new and younger blood to be more actively involved in our fundraising process. I will however continue to assist the MASE association whenever and wherever needed in the future.



SAVE THE DATE!
2022 MASE Fall
Leadership Conference

October 26-28, 2022
Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd, MN



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LEGISLATIVE *update*

There is not a lot of new information to report since the last newsletter column, but with the November revenue forecast around the corner and likely showing a healthy projected state surplus, the legislative session will certainly have its share of action. 2022 is an election year and new legislative district boundaries are in the process of being drawn and both parties will likely be using discussion surrounding the surplus to make their case why they should be in control of the Legislature. There is also a gubernatorial race with a number of Republican candidates lining up to challenge incumbent Governor Walz.

It remains to be seen how eager the Legislature and Governor will be when it comes to spending at least part of the expected surplus. In education, there are certainly needs that remain unmet even after the healthiest increase in the general education revenue basic formula in fifteen years. It's important to remember that the Governor's 2021 budget recommendations and the House education budget target were almost \$200 million above the sum of the total appropriations in the final version of the omnibus education and policy bill passed during the special session and signed by the Governor. The Governor's recommendations and the House version of the omnibus education funding and policy bill contained nearly \$90 million in revenue dedicated to freezing the

special education cross-subsidy at its current level. Because the final target was lower than in either the Governor's or House's initiative and the final bill moved more money into the general education basic formula, only \$10 million was put toward stemming growth in the special education cross-subsidy. If the Legislature and the Governor decide to spend this session, putting more money toward the cross-subsidy is an area where widespread agreement is possible.



Brad Lundell
MASE Lobbyist

Several policy initiatives that were discussed last session may also resurface, particularly the bill that would provide more parent input into placing a private duty nurse with a special education student during the school day. One provision that died relatively early last session but may be brought up again is the temporary extension of transition services past age 21 for an additional year for some students. MASE expressed much concerns last year when this was being discussed and while it may not reappear, MASE needs to be prepared for the possibility it will be discussed again in 2022. ●

2021-22 MASE Committees

The 2021-22 MASE Committees have been published online.

You can find the full list online at:

www.mnase.org/committees

If you missed the sign-up deadline and still would like to serve on a committee please contact Dave Christians (dave.christians@mnasa.org) at the MASE Offices.

Retirees' Support for the Work You Do

As you know, MASE has a membership group just for retirees. However, I think the term "retiree" or "retiree group" nowadays is a misnomer. A retiree is someone who's retired from actively working, yet when I look at the names of people who are on the list of retired members, almost all are still active in different ways. The special educators with whom I've been fortunate to work over the years are passionate about doing the hard work that makes a difference for all students. That passion does not cease when one retires. It just gets redirected into other opportunities that can continue to make a difference.

Needless to say, the one-size-fits-all notion of retirement doesn't seem to exist anymore. There used to be this idea that retirement began on day one when someone walked away from their career and started a life of leisure the next day (traditional retirement). And, then there are others who would take a mini-retirement and sandwich periods of leisure with interim type work (temporary retirement). Yet, what I see are many of my colleagues who didn't walk away from their career or even step back into the same type of position, but instead, have created opportunities to continue to make a difference in the world of special education and to continue to serve others (semi-retirement).

Many of my retiree colleagues are in a semi-retirement mode. They want to continue to serve others and are interested in shifting gears in order to use their accumulated wisdom and experience. Their passion to make an impact still exists. And, they can help our MASE members in many different ways! Directors and other Special Educators are clearly in challenging times. Yet, there are many experienced educators readily available to assist you.

Here are some ways retirees suggested to intentionally support the work you need to do:

1. Ask retirees in your region to support legislative initiatives and communicate with the legislators on key issues. They've been involved in these situations for many years and often times have relationships with key legislators, so involve

them and utilize those connections.

2. Have retirees be mentors to new administrators--this includes coordinators. We often say we plan to do it, but oftentimes it doesn't happen. We really need to be able to connect a retiree with a new administrator. It's about developing your people.
3. Use your retirees to develop a grow-your-own program. Grow-your-own programs take time and this may be something that a retiree can do to help you support your people and develop potentially new administrators.
4. Instead of using retirees to mentor on current technical and legal questions, help support new administrators on the problem-solving and adaptive skills. Think about ways to pull in retirees to support your new administrators.



Jill Skarvold
Retiree Representative
MASE Board of Directors

So, I challenge you. Based on survey information from MASE retirees, they want to be intentionally involved. Whether it's acting as a mentor or providing expertise to a district on finance, personnel/evaluation procedures, program development, or policies and procedures reach out to those experienced MASE retirees. Intentional. Time-saving. Support.

As one retiree stated, "We still care deeply about the profession." ●

Save the Dates!

2022 MASE Week at the Capitol

Dates: February 28 - March 3, 2022

More details to come!

Online Learning Programs and the Provision of FAPE: Five things to keep in mind

Technology is the hallmark of the future, and technological competency is essential to preparing all students for future success. Emerging technologies are an educational resource that enhances learning for everyone, and perhaps especially for students with disabilities." *Dear Colleague Letter: Electronic Book Readers*, 110 LRP 37424 (OCR/DOJ 2010). Before the COVID-19 pandemic brought on the era of distance learning, educational models involving online instruction were already becoming more common, including the ability to attend school virtually. *Dear Colleague Letter*, 68 IDELR 108 (OSERS/OSEP 2016). Undoubtedly, the global pandemic has moved our schools and students faster and further toward online instruction as an alternative to in person instruction.

For some students, including some students with 504 plans or IEPs, online learning provides built-in supports like recorded lessons, fewer distractions, minimized transitions, and asynchronous learning models that allow students to learn in a setting, manner and at a pace that best suits them. On the other hand, it can be a real challenge to ensure that students who require special education and related services receive what the free appropriate public education ("FAPE") to which they are entitled via an online learning program. To that end, this article provides five key considerations for special education administrators to keep in mind when serving students with disabilities in an online learning program.

1. Becoming an Approved Online Learning Provider.

While distance learning has come to an end, school districts and charter schools may elect to continue offering online learning programs as an option to students. In order to become an approved online learning provider, schools and districts must apply through the Minnesota Department of Education ("MDE"). While there is no affirmative obligation on schools to become an online learning provider, MDE is highly encouraging school districts and charter schools to apply to become online learning providers in order to create ongoing flexibility that would allow schools to shift to online learning as needed. *Frequently Asked Questions: Online Learning and Students with Disabilities*, MDE (October 12, 2021).

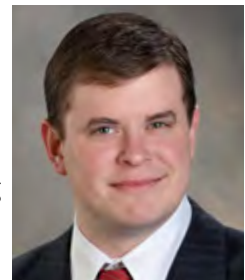
In order to provide full-time online learning or blended learning (where students receive instruction online for more than fifty percent of their weekly schedule), school districts and charter schools must apply to MDE to become an approved online learning provider. MDE has created a provisional, expedited approval process for online and blended learning during the 2021-22 school year. Approved online learning providers may offer full-time and/or supplemental online learning. The distinction being that full-time online learning provides a comprehensive public education, while supplemental online learning means an online course taken in place of a course period at a local district school. MDE is also responsible for ensuring that all Minnesota school districts and charter schools, including online learning options, implement the requirements of IDEA.

2. Enrollment, Non-discrimination, and the Responsibility for Providing a FAPE.

A student may choose to apply for enrollment in an approved online learning program by open enrolling in a full-time (comprehensive) online learning program offered by another Minnesota school district or charter school. Enrollment procedures cannot be based on a student's disability status as this would constitute disability-based discrimination in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation act and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. If a student decides to open enroll in an online learning program offered by another district or school, the responsibility for providing the student



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Legal Notes continued on page 12.

with a FAPE transfers to the school district or charter school offering the online learning program.

A student may also choose to participate in supplemental online learning courses. So long as the online course do not surpass fifty percent of the student's full schedule per term during a single school year, the student's enrollment does not change, and the enrolling school district or charter school remains responsible for ensuring FAPE is provided to the student. However, the supplemental online learning course provider is responsible for assuring an appropriate program is available to the student, including providing services in conformity with the student's IEP, for the supplemental online learning course(s).

Additionally, students cannot be required to enroll in online learning program. While schools and school districts can certainly offer an online learning program as, for example, an alternative educational placement if the student is suspended for more than five consecutive school days or if the student is expelled from school, enrollment must be voluntary.

3. Accessibility. The concept of accessibility "involves the design of materials (e.g., curricula and resources), devices (e.g., smart phones and tablets), digital tools (e.g., computers, apps, and games), and platforms (e.g., online learning and websites) that support access to educational content and activities. Further, accessibility refers to accommodating individual cognitive and physical needs to remove unnecessary obstacles so that students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in formative and summative assessments." Alise Crossland et al., Center on Technology and Disability, Digital Accessibility Toolkit: What Education Leaders Need to Know (2016). Accessible technology is imperative to complying with anti-discrimination laws. It is also essential to ensuring that students have the ability to access their educational programming and receive a FAPE. From captions on videos to alternative text on websites or in e-books to describe images to text-to-speech and speech-to-text technology, accessibility considerations should remain front of mind when a student with a disability is engaging in online learning of any kind—inside the classroom or out.

4. Providing a FAPE. If a student with an existing IEP or Section 504 plan enrolls in an online learning program, the student's IEP team or 504 team should meet to determine whether and/or to what extent the student can receive a FAPE via an online learning

program. If there is a way for the student to attend the online learning program *and* receive a FAPE, the student should be permitted to do so. This may require that the student's IEP or Section 504 plan is revised to include additional program modifications and supports. For example, a student may require that a paraprofessional be available to them online. Or perhaps, the student needs regular check in meetings with the case manager to stay on track. It is also important to remember that switching from an in-person learning environment to an online learning environment may have the effect of changing the student's placement. For example, it is possible that a student who was determined to require a Setting III placement on the least restrictive environment continuum while attending school in person may be able to operate in a Setting I placement online due to the reduced amount of in-person interactions with peers and staff and/or reduced transitions. If that is the case, the Student's IEP team should meet to discuss placement and propose that the student's placement be changed by way of an prior written notice.

In contrast, if a student with a disability enrolls in an online learning program and the student's team determines that it is not feasible for the student to receive a FAPE online, the team should discuss another location or locations where the student would be able to receive a FAPE and offer an appropriate location of services. Generally speaking, location of services is a determination that is left to the school district so long as the program remains substantially and materially similar to what is required by the student's IEP.

5. Monitoring Attendance and Progress. One of the big takeaways from distance learning was that school staff cannot operate on the assumption that no news is good news. To assume everything is working without proactively monitoring the student's attendance and progress leaves a school or district exposed claims for denial of a FAPE and compensatory education. Engaging with students and families who are utilizing online learning options to make sure there are no issues with regard to attendance or engagement is therefore a key step. When students are engaging in online learning, staff and IEP teams need to be diligent about collecting data, monitoring the student's progress and making adjustments to address any deficiencies. ●

MASE CALENDAR

2021

December 10

MDE Special Education Directors' Forum

9:30-11:30 am | Virtual

2022

January 16-19

CEC Convention

Orlando, FL

January 19

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Virtual

January 21

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

Virtual

February 11

MDE Special Education Directors' Forum

9:30-11:30 am | Virtual

February 16

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Virtual

February 22

Case Winter Workshop

Virtual

March 9

MASE Board of Directors Meeting

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

March 10-11

MASA/MASE Spring Conference

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

March 18

MDE Special Education Directors' Forum

9:30-11:30 am | Virtual

April 8

MDE Special Education Directors' Forum

9:30-11:30 am | Virtual

April 15

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

Virtual

April 20

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Virtual

May 11

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

May 11-13

MASE Best Practices Conference

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

May 20

MDE Special Education Directors' Forum

9:30-11:30 am | Virtual

June 10

MDE Special Education Directors' Forum

9:30-11:30 am | Virtual

June 17

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

Virtual

June 23-24

MASE and MASA Board Retreats

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

July 1

MASE Membership Renewal

November 8

CASE Executive Committee Meeting

Marriott, Salt Lake City, UT

November 9-10

CASE Board Meeting

Marriott, Salt Lake City, UT

November 10-12

CASE Fall Conference

Marriott, Salt Lake City, UT

Have You Moved in 2021-22?

Help us keep track of you - and keep your MASE benefits and services coming to you. Please fill out this online form to let us know if you will have moved positions or districts for the 2021-22 school year!

MASE Transitions Online Form: <https://forms.gle/Se48RhNPPhLpGDPB6>

If you have new colleagues in your area who are not MASE members, please let deb.larson@mnsa.org know and we will send membership information to them.