

Minnesota Administrators for Special Education
P.O. Box 9400 • North St. Paul, MN 55109 • (651) 645-6272

News Release

For Immediate Release: October 25, 2022

Contact: Lori Zimmerman, lori.zimmerman@mnasa.org
Director of Professional Learning
(651) 645-6272

Renaë Ouillette Receives MASE Legacy Award

The Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) has named Renaë Ouillette, Retired Executive Director of Student Services of Lakeville Area Public Schools, the recipient of the 2022 Legacy Award. Ouillette will be honored for her commitment to encouraging, developing, and mentoring leaders who reflect the MASE mission at a statewide recognition ceremony during the 2022 MASE Fall Leadership Conference, October 26-28, 2022, at Madden's on Gull Lake.

Ouillette has a long history of service in the field of special education. She began her career as a Special Education Coordinator in the Sherburne and Northern Wright Special Education Cooperative. In 1997, she moved to Lakeville Area Schools, where she served as a Special Education Coordinator, Director of Special Services, and then finally as the Executive Director of Student Services. Ouillette retired from Lakeville Area Schools in August 2022.

"Renaë is set apart by her ability to be a leader of leaders," said Todd Travis, Director of Special Education of the Midwest Special Education Cooperative. "She has a rare combination of immense technical skill in areas such as due process and finance while also possessing amazing interpersonal skills necessary to articulate complex ideas in a way that engages and motivates others."

Under Ouillette's leadership, Lakeville Area Public Schools was one of the first districts to co-locate mental health services for students, which included having a therapist in the classroom for those who needed support. In addition, she also supported the Best Buddies program, an after-school club for inclusion that brings together middle and high school special education students with general education students. Ouillette developed and led a very active Special Education Advisory Council, which has established an annual celebration of Inclusive Schools Week.

In service to her special education colleagues across the state, Ouillette has contributed to professional learning by collaborating to deliver the Special Education Finance Bootcamp, a popular workshop series attended by special education leaders, school finance directors, and superintendents. She has served as a Peer Monitor for the Minnesota Department of Education, Division of Compliance and Accountability, and as a member of the Minnesota State Autism Network. In 2001 through her work with the Minnesota State Autism Network, Ouillette helped draft new autism spectrum disorder (ASD) criteria and the ASD Promising Practices Manual. She was appointed to the Minnesota Autism Task Force from 2009-2014 and she was active locally in the Dakota County Collaborative.

Ouillette has been an active member of MASE during her career. She has served in several leadership capacities, including the Professional Development Committee Chair, Strategic Planning Committee Chair, and a member of the Membership Committee. In addition, she has served on both the MASE and Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) Board of Directors, serving as the MASA Metro Special Education Component Representative. Ouillette was also a member of the MASA Executive Development Committee as a joint MASA-MASE member.

Ouillette earned a master's degree in school psychology from Central Michigan University. She received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Michigan State University.

The MASE Nominating Committee selects the Legacy Award recipient based on a review of biographical information provided in the nomination materials. The recipient must be a current active MASE member (or active at the time of their retirement) who has contributed to the professional growth and development of others through a service history as a long-standing, contributing MASE member. The recipient must demonstrate a commitment to the field of special education through training, mentoring, personal support, modeling, and demonstrating an impact that is considerable and measurable over time; and contribution at the local, regional, and state levels.

MASE is a professional association organized to promote programs and services to improve the education of children with disabilities, to foster high quality programs of professional development, and to study problems relating to serving children with disabilities and improving the leadership of administrators for special education. MASE members are administrators for special education in public or private schools, cooperative regional, state and other educational administrative units, college and university professors of special education teacher or administrator preparation programs, and administrators, coordinators or consultants for the Minnesota Department of Education.

###