



IMPACT

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Fall 2018

MASE Strategic Planning

*"It is the set of the sails, not the direction of the wind that determines which way we will go."
- Jim Rohn*

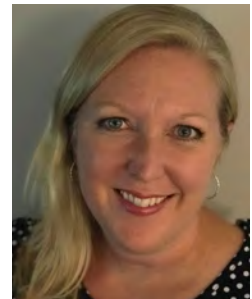
Every year is an exciting one for MASE members, and this year looks to be especially action-packed. I feel fortunate and honored to be the MASE president during a year in which I hope the wind helps determine our path. Although, as in the words of Vince Lombardi, "hope is not a strategy." This is where our MASE Strategic Plan comes to play as it will help set the direction of our organization. Being that this is the first newsletter of the school year, I am going to tell you the story of the most recent MASE strategic planning process.

Important functions of MASE include engaging members, studying member common problems, and communicating information to improve services for children with disabilities. In order to meet MASE's mission of building strong leaders who work on behalf of students with disabilities, better understanding both the strengths and challenges that exist throughout the regions of the state is critical.

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During the 17-18 school year, the MASE Board and Strategic Planning Committee discussed the importance of obtaining broad member input from all regions in Minnesota. The task of the Strategic Planning Committee was to review progress from previous strategic plans, engage members by seeking input, identify present membership strengths and needs, and support committee's chairs and co-chairs to develop long and short term goals.



Laura Pingry-Kile
MASE President
Director of Special Services
Eastern Carver County Schools

To gain input and engage members, the Strategic Planning Committee drafted prompts for each of the MASE regions to discuss at a local meeting. The MASE regional representative facilitated a focus group type of approach to generate local discussion surrounding common issues. Discussion prompts included:

1. Share victories and/or successes related to regional special education programming and administration.
2. Name your region's top 3 immediate areas of concern that MASE could work on addressing.
3. Looking forward 3-5 years, name anticipated areas in which MASE could assist and support the work of special education directors.
4. Name opportunities that MASE could provide additional member support.
5. Share effective models of professional development and staff/teacher preparation conducted within districts and/or regions.
6. Share creative ways in which districts and/or regions have assisted in filling hard-to-fill positions due to shortages.

MASE Strategic Planning continued on page 5.

Special thanks to our 2018-19 MASE Business Partners!

The MASE Business Partnerships 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.

Tier 3

Grand Canyon University
Kennedy & Graven, Chartered
Kraus-Anderson Construction Company
Strategic Staffing Solutions

Tier 2

Indigo Education
Knutson, Flynn & Deans, P.A.
Ratwik, Roszak, & Maloney, PA
Rupp, Anderson, Squires & Waldspurger, P.A.
SpEd Forms

Tier 1

CAREI
Pemberton Law
Public Consulting Group
Speech Partners
Transition Assessments and Curriculum
TSP Architects & Engineers
UCP/Infinitec
University of St. Thomas, Department of Special & Gifted Education

You're Back for Another Year...Thank You!

I encourage you to look forward to the opportunities provided by your status as a special education administrator to advocate in two disparate areas.

First, assist regular education to do an even better job at addressing the needs of struggling learners. We all know that the better that regular education does in educating students, the less likely it is that there will be a need for the supports provided by special education. You can and should assist regular education in every way legally possible to support students. You will notice that I make reference to "legally possible." I do so because I've been in the profession long enough to experience well-intended pressure to provide services outside the allowable framework. "If you could just find a way to add a paraprofessional to Ms. Johnson's classroom things would go so much better for the students in her class."

Second, a recent conversation with one of my mentors and good friend, Dr. Gary Lewis prompted me to recall a long time ago meeting with a high school English teacher. At that time, I was a well-established school psychologist. Basically, I realized that I didn't know as much as I thought I did when I came out of graduate school. This teacher asked to meet with me one day after school in January because one of his 9th grade students really appeared to be struggling to make it through his course. That was a relatively new experience for him, as he took great pride in getting each and every student through his course. We identified all of the interventions that he had attempted. The student had perfect attendance and had completed all assigned tasks, but continued to perform poorly on the summative assessments (although back then we did not call them summative assessments, they were just called: tests). I reviewed the educational records and we met with the parents who described the hours spent each and every school night and into the weekends to complete coursework. This was nothing new as they, as a family, had committed those hours to support their student since first grade. However, the evenings of study were becoming longer and had evolved into an emotionally challenging experience for their daughter. They had begun to be concerned that their daughter was depressed. School had become an ordeal. The parents were thrilled that the school was willing to take a look at trying to determine what was getting in the way of their daughter's progress. Upon completing the evaluation, we determined that the student was eligible for special education services under what was then the educationally

mentally handicapped (EMH) model. Through the herculean efforts of the student, her family and some exceptional teachers she had made it through 8th grade without any special education support, but not without a cost to all of them. The supports that we were then able to put in place for this student and by extension her family allowed her to have a positive educational experience that addressed her learning challenges. She graduated and from all accounts had a positive and well-rounded experience throughout high school. My point is that special education can be a true gift and you can help to facilitate that gift.



John Klaber
MASE Executive Director

Hearing from you about the challenges that you continue to experience with filling open positions and figuring out how to pay for them, MASE has been working to address those challenges. After our very successful inaugural training session, our Special Education Finance Bootcamp team has met and planned a series of trainings throughout the state. By the time you read this, you should have received a registration information vfor those trainings. Additionally, members of that team, Brad Lundell, our lobbyist and a representative from MSBO were able to encourage the chairman of the Senate E-12 Policy Committee to convene his committee in order to discuss the funding and workload challenges. Our testimony focused on the inequities in the funding structure, which was supported, very publicly, by representatives of the MDE. In mid-September other MASE members have agreed to share with the committee the challenges that our staff face to address the, sometimes onerous, paperwork requirements.

I have also been able to represent MASE on the PELSB workgroup delegated by the past legislative session to review the various special education licenses to determine whether there might be opportunities for greater efficiency. Naturally, there is and will be a robust conversation about whether the state should move towards a true cross-categorical special education teaching license. The board has been directed to prepare a report to the legislature by the end of the current year.

Another Year continued on page 4.

MASE IMPACT

Fall 2018

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Janell Bullard (18-19)

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MNCEC Liaison (13-19)

Marcy Doud

Assistant Superintendent, West. St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools

Executive Director

John Klaber

Another Year from page 3.

So, more to come.

I hope that the start of the year has gone well for you. There are and will be many challenges that you will face. Please know that MASE and its members and its office staff are there to assist you. While you may be the lone special educator administrator in your school district or part of a large district or cooperative special education leadership team, you are always a member of the MASE team. We are all in this together. ●

2018 CASE/NASDSE Conference

November 8-10, 2018

Beau Ridge - Biloxi, MS

Registration information at www.casecec.org



Save the Date!



MASE
Best Practices
May 15-17, 2019
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

Special Education Finance Bootcamp

Register at gced.k12.mn.us

Five regional dates

Topics Covered:

- Overview of Special Ed. Funding
- Understanding your district's SpEd Comprehensive Aid Report
- Maximizing your Revenue
- Time & Effort Reports
- Cross Subsidy Calculation
- Tuition Billing
- Q&A Session and much more!

IMPACT is your newsletter and we encourage your input!
If you have ideas or an article to share, please contact us at
(651) 789-4061 or send an email to dchristians@mnsa.org.

MASE Strategic Planning from page 1.

7. Name ways in which due process paperwork could be reduced.
8. Share examples of successful collaboration between special education and other agencies/departments within your region.

Thank you to region representatives for facilitating rich, important discussions and thank you to John Klaber for attending and participating in regional meetings. In March the board reviewed a summary of results and themes consistent among regions. After some additional data collection, the board dedicated time during their June annual retreat to discuss applications of the results to committee work.

The process the board used to approach this work is one that we all know and love – the special education evaluation and program planning process! Board members rotated and participated in discussion at four poster sessions: state legislative, federal advocacy, membership, and professional development. At each poster, board members actively participated in generating a MASE Strategic Plan (MSP) for committee work and areas of focus. Groups reviewed present levels of performance from regional focus groups, drafted goals, established benchmarks, prioritized focus areas for 18-19, determined progress monitoring tools and strategies, and identified needed services/related services. Committee chairs and co-chairs will use their MSP as a road map for committee work during the 18-19 year.

Added benefits of this process exceed just driving the work of committees. By engaging members and listening to diverse views on issues surrounding our work, we learn from each other and strengthen our social cohesion. We have regions with varied strengths and challenges, yet similar in other things. I learned a lot through this process and look forward to sharing outcomes and progress with you throughout this year.

I also look forward to seeing YOU at the annual MASE board meeting that takes place at the fall conference. Together, we will have some hands-on fun creating a visual that represents each region and their commitment to engage with MASE on this strategic planning journey. You don't want to miss the annual meeting and make sure to recruit your region colleagues to join you! Best wishes for a great school year and set your sails for success! ●

2018-19 MASE Committees

The 2018-19 MASE Committees have been announced.

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 (dchristians@mnasa.org) at the MASE Offices.

2019 MASE Leadership Issues (Formerly "Rural Issues")

October 11, 2018

January 24, 2019

April 25, 2018

Benton Stearns Education District

Sartell, MN

10 am - 2 pm

Agenda:

10 am - Build Agenda

10:15 am - Discussion

12 noon - Lunch

2 pm - Adjourn

Join your colleagues from across the state for good company and great discussion about current topics in special education leadership!

2018-19 MASE New Leaders Cohort

There is still time to register!

The MASE New Leaders Cohort is a series of professional development workshops that provide opportunities for:

- newly employed Minnesota special education directors to explore the basic information needed for a successful first year
- mid-level leaders to enhance leadership skills either in preparation for advancement in leadership or for general skill development
- "newer" leaders who wish to refresh their training

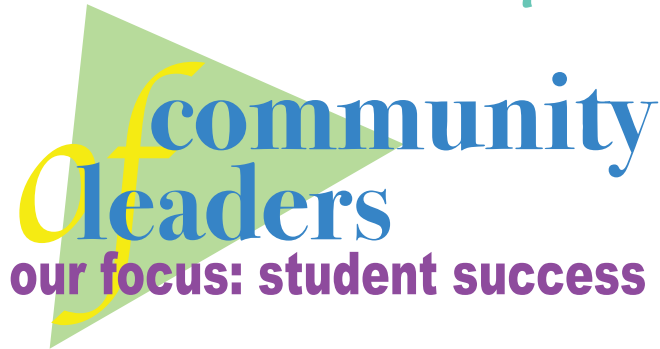
New this year!

Sessions will be tailored for two audiences: the All Leaders' Training (anyone may participate) or the Directors' Cohort (for directors of record).

Registration and full information at www.mnase.org.

FALL CONFERENCE

preview



2018 MASE Fall Leadership Conference

Wednesday-Friday

October 24-26, 2018

Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

Registration information available

at www.mnase.org

One of the most important aspects of special education leadership is building a strong sense of community in schools. We know that quality relationships among students, staff, and families contribute significantly to student success. For all of us, our human need for close, supportive connections is a basic requirement that shapes our motivation and satisfaction. That is most certainly true for students, but also true for teachers as well as building and central office administrators. When we demonstrate our commitment to leading a strong, supportive community, we see a pervasively increased commitment to system values and goals. Join your colleagues this fall in your MASE learning community and explore how leaders can develop and sustain a strong community of leaders to support success for each student.

Conference Highlights

Wednesday night's keynote speaker is **Jody Janati**. After her popular presentation at the 2018 MASE Best Practices Conference, Jody Janati is back with us to continue the conversation! The purpose of this presentation is to specifically address, "What do I say and do" when dealing with people during difficult situations to avoid destructive patterns. Participants will learn how to control their anger and emotions, be assertive and effectively defuse conflict through a variety of applied approaches. Multiple techniques will be discussed to demonstrate that practical solutions are attainable through a variety of step by step methods. Dr. Janati's books will be for sale following her presentation.

On Thursday morning, **Kent Pekel, President and CEO, Search Institute**, will present, "How Leaders Can Build and Strengthen Relationships to Benefit All Students." Come hear how a main focus of Search Institute is to create strategies and tools to support organizations in being more intentional and inclusive in their efforts to strengthen relationships with and among all the young people and families they serve, particularly those who have historically been marginalized in society.

Eighteen different **small group sessions** will allow you to customize your conference experience. Sessions will be posted in the "breakout session" section of the registration materials on October 1.

Are you interested in presenting a small group session at the conference? Proposals will be accepted until September 24 - information can be found at www.mnase.org.

On Thursday afternoon, join your colleagues for the **MASE Annual Meeting**, a chance to get updated on Association activities and hear from **State Special Education Director Robyn Widley** and participate in a fun activity with your regional colleagues. One lucky participant's district will win an Echo Show, a hands-free virtual assistant you control with your voice.

The **Exhibit Fair** offers a chance for participants to visit with businesses offering the latest products and services that can benefit your programs. Many of MASE's Business Partner Members will be exhibiting – stop by and thank them for their partnership! The **Thursday afternoon reception** will be held in the Exhibit Area.

Dinner on Thursday will feature the presentation of the **MASE Legacy Award to Gary Lewis**. Gary will be honored for his 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.

Celebrate with friends and colleagues at the annual **Pumpkin Patch Bash**, featuring music, refreshments, and the company of friends!

On Friday morning, we will offer more small group sessions and our closing general session, our **retiree panel, Building Community on Behalf of Our Students**. Nan Records, Regional Low Incidence Facilitator, Sourcewell and Retiree Representative to the MASE Board of Directors, will moderate a panel of our most famous former directors who will share their reflections on their years of special education leadership and provide expert perspective on the "hows and whys" of leading systems that attract and support excellent teachers and administrators,

FALL CONFERENCE

fundraising

Each year at our fall conference, we hold several fundraising events to benefit leadership development in special education. This year, we again dedicate our efforts to supporting MNSELF.

MNSELF is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization created to raise funds to sponsor leadership training for current and aspiring directors of special education.

This fall, we invite everyone to participate in some fun events that will raise funds to support MNSELF!

Credit cards will be accepted at all fundraising events!



Wine Tasting

Wednesday evening, October 24 from 8-10 pm at the Poolside at Cragun's!

Our theme for the Wine Tasting this year is "Won't You Let Me Take You on a MASE Cruise?" Oo-ee, oo-ee baby ... whether you remember Frankie Ford belting out his fave sea cruise "American Graffiti" style, or you just have fond memories of Royal Caribbean, now is your chance to revisit the magic! Whether you go rock 'n roll or coral atoll, get your cruise wear ready and sample your favorite beverages, all to support MNSELF. Our MASE Areas will once again sponsor tables to show off their best MASE Cruise table themes. Everyone votes for their favorite table, and the beautiful (oo-ahhhh) MASE traveling trophy is at stake!

Last year, Area B won the coveted MASE traveling trophy for the best Area wine table of the 2017 conference.

Area Themes for 2018

- Area A Beer
- Area B "Other" Wine ... Rose, Moscato, Champagne ...
- Area C Minnesota Grown (Beverages from right here in the Great State)
- Area D Liqueur and Coffee Drinks
- Area E Non-alcoholic Fancy Drinks (Not Soda Pop)
- Area F1 Foo Foo Drinks
- Area F2 Lager and Ale
- Area G Red Wine
- Area H White Wine

Silent Auction

Thursday, October 25 - bidding is open all day, 8 am - 5 pm

Please bring your auction items to the registration desk Wednesday or Thursday. Auction items will be on display throughout the day. Be imaginative and donate items you think your colleagues will value. In past years, popular items have included consulting time, books, gift certificates, tickets, home-cooked meals, gift baskets and more.

Guess How Many...

Thursday, October 25 - guessing is open all day, 8 am - 5 pm

Be sure to stop at the Silent Auction on Thursday and enter your guess for the number of Hershey's Kisses in the jar. For a \$10 donation, you can enter one guess – enter as many times as you would like! The person guessing the number closest to the actual number will win a \$500 Amazon gift card. And the person in second place will win the jar of kisses. The winners will be announced Thursday evening at the pumpkin Patch Bash.

Grab Bag Wine Sales

Thursday, October 25 - at the reception before dinner, 5-6 pm

Every bottle of wine is the same price ... but bottles will be hidden in beautiful wine bags tied with red, white, or pink ribbons. The ribbons are your only hints! Pay one price and you might get "Three Buck Chuck," or you might get Chateau Lafitte Rothschild Bordeaux (well, probably not, but something really great anyway!).

Thank you for supporting MNSELF!

2018-19 *board of directors*

Meet your 2017-18 MASE Board of Directors!

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Area Representatives:

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Even Year Election (18-20)
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Area B (Region 7)

Odd Year Election (17-19)
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Area C (Region 4)

Even Year Election (16-20)
Shannon Erickson
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Area D (Region 5 & 6)

Odd Year Election (17-19)
Jamie Nord
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jnord@scred.k12.mn.us

Area E (Region 3)

Even Year Election (18-20)
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Area F-1 (Region 2)

Odd Year Election (17-19)
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Area F-2 (Region 1)

Even Year Election (16-20)
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Area G (Region 9E)

Odd Year Election (17-19)
Kim Chalmers
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Area H (Region 9W)

Even Year Election (18-20)
Deb Anderson
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Retiree Representative

Odd Year Election (17-19)
Nan Records
Regional Low Incidence Facilitator
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Odd Year Election (13-19)
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Gary Lewis Receives MASE Legacy Award

Gary Lewis, Retired Director of Student Services for Northfield Public Schools (Minnesota) and CEO of SpEd Forms, Inc., has been awarded the Legacy Award by the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE). Dr. Lewis will be honored for his commitment to encouraging, developing, and mentoring leaders who reflect the MASE mission at a statewide recognition ceremony to be held at the 2018 MASE Fall Leadership Conference, October 24-26 at Cragun's Conference Center in Brainerd.

Dr. Lewis served as a Special Education Administrator for a total of 24 years. He served as the Director of Special Education for the River Bend Education District from 1989-2003 and then as the Director of Student Services at Northfield Public Schools from 2003-2013. Since 2013, Dr. Lewis has been the CEO of SpEd Forms, Inc.

Dr. Lewis has been a mentor to many people through his career. He understands that high-quality teachers are the most critical component of public education. Dr. Lewis is not afraid to make challenging decisions in staffing models, always looking to place teachers in a position where they and students can be most successful.

"Dr. Lewis is a true legend among Minnesota educators. He is a visionary leader who possesses the necessary administrative skill to see that vision implemented and measured," said Dr. Matthew Hillmann, Superintendent of Northfield Public Schools. "He is a champion for students with disabilities, ensuring each child has the opportunity to maximize their free and appropriate public education."

Dr. Lewis is always willing to take a fresh look at things, find new approaches, and try new strategies to address the organizational challenges and state and federal based hurdles special education programs face. During his time as Director of Student Services at Northfield Public Schools, Dr. Lewis was an innovator who studied issues thoroughly and implemented plans with fidelity. His teachers were well-trained and supported, his students well-served, and parents were heard and felt valued.

Dr. Lewis plays a crucial role in statewide advocacy for Special Education. He is routinely asked by the Minnesota Department of Education for input on rule-making and other policy advice. Dr. Lewis and his team at River Bend Education District transformed the tracking of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) by developing the SpEd Forms

software platform. Today, the vast majority of Minnesota special education teachers use this software to track IEPs efficiently and securely.

Dr. Lewis was an active member of MASE, MN Association of School Administrators (MASA), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) / Council of Administrators for Special Education (CASE), and the MN Special Education Leaders Foundation (MNSSELF). In 1999, he received the MASE

Distinguished Service Award for exemplary service in the interest of Minnesota Public Education.

Dr. Lewis received a doctorate degree in Education from the University of Northern Colorado and a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology and English and a School Psychology Certification from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

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 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. ●



Gary Lewis
Retired Director of Student
Services
Northfield Public Schools
CEO
SpEd Forms, Inc.

LEGISLATIVE *update*

After the 2018 legislative session ended with a resounding thud, it looked as though things would be quiet throughout the summer. It's a big election year in Minnesota with everyone except the State Senate on the ballot this fall so there isn't a lot of action at the Capitol. One issue that is receiving attention is special education, both in terms of funding and regulation.

The omnibus supplemental appropriations bill vetoed by the Governor last session included the establishment of a working group comprised of stakeholders to tackle issues related to special education. Given the Governor's veto, the Senate Education Committee decided to study these issues in the absence of the working group.

Senate Education Policy Chair Eric Pratt plans to hold one hearing a month until the beginning of the 2019 legislative session. As I write, there have been two hearings. The first hearing consisted of a review of the Legislative Auditor's report on special education that was issued in 2013 and which resulted in some policy changes. The hearing also featured a presentation from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) relating to the history of special education funding in Minnesota.

The second hearing featured discussion of the changes of the special education formula that were implemented in 2013. Dr. Tom Melcher provided a Powerpoint presentation that described the formula and the goals of the changes. There is no question that there have been a variety of issues with the new formula, but when the new formula was put in place in 2013, it was done with less than a quarter of the revenue estimate requested to smooth the transition to the new formula. As a result, there have been both adequacy and distributional issues with the new formula.

Dr. Marcy Doud from West St. Paul-Mendota Heights school district and Dr. Rene Ouillette from the Lakeville school district provided testimony for MASE. Doud was a member of the Governor's Education Funding Task Force that met during Governor Dayton's first term and has first hand knowledge of how the proposed formula was put together and how the decision to not fully fund the transition to the new formula has caused funding issues for a variety of school districts. Both Doud and Ouillette outlined

some of the issues that are driving costs and the need to resolve these problems.

Because this is the Education Policy Committee, the ability of the panel to make funding recommendations is limited. But the willingness of the committee to discuss the shortcomings of the formula is a real plus and with so many school districts watching their cross-subsidy from their general fund pay for special education services grow dramatically, there is clearly a desire to tackle the funding issue going forward.

The committee will now be turning to special education procedures and how Minnesota rules may be adding undue paperwork requirements to special education practitioners. The committee will also be looking into the process used to develop individualized education plans and how the due process system works.

I will certainly be attending all these meetings and providing updates as the final set of recommendations take shape. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments. I can be reached at lundelllegislative31@gmail.com or 612-220-7459. ●



Brad Lundell
MASE Lobbyist

MASE Legislative Resources

Be sure to check out MASE Lobbyist Brad Lundell's blog (see-notes.blogspot.com) for his ongoing updates and commentary. You can reach Brad at brad.lundell@schoolsforequity.org.

Members will receive legislative email updates during the session too!

If you are not receiving the session updates please contact: members@mnasa.org

www.mnase.org/legislative has all of MASE's legislative resources including:

MASE Legislative Platform
Directories for the MN House and Senate
ESEA Flexibility Process

A Year Later, Mixed Emotions

by Lori Fildes, Adjunct Instructor, Bethel University Special Education Director Licensure Program
Retired Director of Special Education, Wayzata Public Schools

Greetings MASE Colleagues and congratulations to those who are about to embark into another new school year. Congratulations also to those colleagues who have retired from Special Education Administration and who are seeking other adventures both within the field of special education and elsewhere.

As I attempt to write this article, I find myself wrestling with mixed emotions which include a strong sense of void that my time as a Director of Special Education is over and a strong sense of hope and excitement for current and future leaders. When I first became a director of special education in 1994, my time was generally spent ensuring compliance and managing dispute resolution issues. There was a lesser focus on outcomes for students with disabilities. Fast forward to present time. Special education administrators find themselves energized with the profound role of instructional leadership. This is not to say that this role is new. However with each initiative that emerges from the Federal Government, State of Minnesota, and the LEA's, the role has continued to evolve, grow and has become more critical than ever.

As I think back to my years in administration, I am grateful to have had an opportunity to be a part of those initiatives. As imperfect as each of them are, they are equally promising in their demand that educators strive to insure every student succeeds. I am also grateful for the support of the MASE organization and the opportunities I had to learn from all of you as well as serve the organization through the MASE Board of Directors and committee work. I encourage each of you, if you have not done so already, to actively participate in MASE in one way or another. There are so many opportunities to be involved. As an adjunct instructor for Bethel University, I often encourage future special education leaders to join MASE as a student member and then join in full membership as they secure their first special education leadership role. The organization is as strong as its member force and has been a huge support to me both as an active special education director and now into my retirement.

Finally, I am not going to lie. Retirement is a beautiful thing. I am grateful to be continuing as a MASE member, working with Bethel University, traveling here and there with my husband, and seeing my grandson whenever I want. By the way, my second grandson is due September 24th! Although I miss the day to day joys and challenges of special education administration, I do not miss my alarm clock going off at 4:00 am. There is a side list of a few other things I do not miss and I am guessing you have a similar list. But the good news is that one day you will be old like me and be able to retire. In the meantime, I salute all that you do for students with disabilities and their families and please know my house up on Gull Lake is always open to you. ●

Save the Date!

MASE Day at the Capitol

Tuesday, March 21, 2019

The day will begin with a breakfast and legislative meeting starting at 8:30 am at the Best Western Plus Capitol Ridge Hotel and the group will then head to the Capitol to meet with various legislators. The group will then reconvene back at the hotel at around 2:45 pm.

All MASE members are welcome to attend!

More details to be announced shortly!

RESEARCH TO *practice*

Why is it so Difficult to Sustain Change Over Time?

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. I'd like to kick off the start of the school year by talking about system change and the challenges to sustaining change and outcomes over time. I'm sure we can all identify a program or practice which resulted in some immediate positive outcomes, but then those outcomes were not maintained. Why does this happen? In their book, *The Adaptive School*, Garmston and Wellman (2016) make the distinction between technical and adaptive change. Technical change involves fixing an ordinary problem without changing the system. Adaptive change involves fixing a problem by disrupting the system. In the medical field, if high blood pressure is the problem, taking blood pressure medication is an example of technical change. On the other hand, changing diet and lifestyle is an example of adaptive change.

In education, both types of change are needed. Technical challenges differ from adaptive ones in that problems and solutions are easy to identify, can sometimes be solved by mandates, and rarely involve looking at the underlying root causes of problems. Adaptive changes require a systems view, may involve changes in values, are difficult to identify, require ownership of the problem by the people closest to it, and require experimental thinking. Let's think about the same problem from these two lenses. Suppose a district notices that many students are below proficiency on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. One school decides to provide interventions to students who are just below the desired proficiency (often referred to as students on the "bubble" while a second school decides to concentrate on improving literacy for all students by focusing on improving universal instructional practices. The first school may see some positive results in the first year, but the second school will most likely have more dramatic and long-term results three years later. The first school treated an adaptive challenge as a technical one and got quick but non-stainable change. The second school treated the problem as

an adaptive challenge by taking a system's approach and trying to understand the root cause of the problem.

Districts that take an adaptive approach to change understand the principles of system change. First, they understand that more data do not lead to better predictions. We have all heard the phrase "data rich but information poor." Having a plethora of data without the infrastructure for staff to dialogue and try to understand root causes will likely not lead to lasting change. Second, adaptive change also rests on the principle that everything influences everything else. In schools, the school culture and climate in a building impact how adults feel about their work, the energy they invest, and the outcomes achieved by students. Third, tiny events can create major disturbances. Consider a Professional Learning Community (PLC) where a trained facilitator is skilled at paraphrasing and inquiry. These facilitators are able to open up the thinking of others and have deeper and more meaningful conversations. Finally, adaptive change leaders understand that you don't have to touch everyone in the system to make a difference.

Adaptive change requires us to ask who we are, why we are doing things, and why we are doing things in a certain way. All too often, tradition and habit drive many school practices. A classic story summarizes this point. A little girl was watching her mother prepare a ham and wanted to know why her mom was cutting the end of the ham off before putting it in the pan. The mother told her daughter that she didn't know why she cut the end off the ham but that is what her mother taught her to do. So, the little girl went to see her grandmother and asked the same question. The grandmother replied that her mother did it that way but she didn't know why. The little girl went to see her great-grandmother and asked her why she cut the end of the ham off before putting it in the roasting pan. Her great-grandmother replied, "I grew up in a



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Getting on the Same Page: A Back-to-School Review of Why the Paperwork Matters

Paperwork. An essential part of any special educator's job that some may describe as "time consuming," or even "painful." In light of state and federal requirements, not to mention the role that that paperwork can play in a special education dispute, special education paperwork is not an area that any special educator can afford to ignore. The beginning of a new school year is a great time to make sure that your special education team is on the same page when it comes to making sure the paperwork gets done and gets done well.

The primary document that educators think of when they think of special education is the Individualized Education Program ("IEP"). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), and analogous Minnesota law, requires IEP teams to develop, review, and revise a student's IEP based on his or her individual needs. See, e.g., 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.320-300.324; see also Minn. Stat. § 125A.08. Given the potential for disagreement as to the nature of a student's needs and the appropriate services to provide the student, IEP team members would be well advised to document, document, document every observation, report, and discussion of the student's needs, including discussions that take place at IEP meetings and communications with parents. Assigning a designated note-taker during each IEP meeting is one way to help ensure that there is a record of the team's deliberations. Detailed team meeting notes may help prevent confusion among parents and team members, and will be key evidence in the event of any future dispute.

In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") requires school districts must provide parents of special education students with a Prior Written Notice ("PWN") before proposing or refusing to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of Free Appropriate Public Education ("FAPE"), *even if the change was proposed by the student's parent*. 34 C.F.R. § 300.503(a). The PWN must include certain information, including an "explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action," a "description of other options that the IEP Team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected," and a "description of other factors that are

relevant to the agency's proposal or refusal." 34 C.F.R. § 300.503(b) (emphasis added).

The failure to provide a PWN at all—or providing a PWN that does not contain all required information—is a violation of the IDEA and Minnesota law. It is also a missed opportunity for educators to document the rationale for their proposals affecting the student's education. Thoroughly documenting the reason for a proposal, as opposed to merely identifying the proposal itself, provides the school with potentially critical evidence in the event of a future dispute over that proposal. The IDEA also requires students' IEP teams to consider parental input when developing and revising the IEP. *K.E. v. Independent School District No. 15*, 647 F.3d 795, 805-06 (8th Cir. 2011). If the IEP team rejects a parent's proposal, thoroughly documenting the reason(s) for rejecting the proposal in the PWN not only satisfies the IDEA procedural requirement, but also provides evidence that the team met its obligation to consider the parents' input.

Team meeting notices, IEP team sign-in sheets, and other paperwork produced during the IEP development process can also provide essential evidence of compliance with IDEA procedural requirements. For instance, thoroughly documenting IEP team meetings is one way a district can prove that the IEP meeting conformed with the requirements of the IDEA. This includes making sure that documentation related to team member attendance is in order. As an example, a 2014 Minnesota Department of Education ("MDE") decision found that a school district failed to follow the procedural requirements of the IDEA because two teachers on a student's IEP team left an IEP meeting early without



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the written consent of the student's parent.¹ *Indep. Sch. Dist. #011*, 114 LRP 37490 (SEA MN 2014). While there are certain circumstances that may allow for team members to be excused from attending an IEP meeting, districts must always obtain prior written consent from the student's parent. If a modification to or discussion of the team member's area of the curriculum or related services is being discussed, the team member must submit, in writing, to the parent and the IEP team input into the development of the IEP prior to the meeting. 23 C.F.R. § 300321(e)(1)(2). In the *Dist. #110* case, the team could not produce evidence that these requirements were satisfied.

It is important to keep in mind that IDEA due process paperwork may be reviewed by a hearing officer or court years after the meeting takes place. This was the case in *R.P. by R.P. and C.P. v. Alamo Heights Independent School District*, 60 IDELR 60 (5th Cir. 2012). In that case, an IEP team, in the spring of 2008, called for an Assistive Technology Evaluation to be completed by October 2008. The IEP team met again in October and December of 2008, but the record did not reflect that the assessment had been completed. It was not until May 2009, that the results of the evaluation were incorporated into the student's IEP. Though the court did not find that the student was denied a FAPE, it did conclude that the IEP team had failed to "sufficiently individualize" the student's program based on her assessments. The *Alamo Heights* case demonstrates why documentation is essential. Proper documentation should make it readily apparent that an IEP team meeting was properly run, that parents had a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of their child's IEP, and that any new evaluation was discussed and considered by the team.

Incomplete and/or inaccurate paperwork exposes the school district to liability. It can also expose staff to serious employment ramifications. In at least two instances, arbitrators have sustained discipline against special education personnel who exhibited poor performance with respect to special education paperwork. In one instance, the immediate termination of a teacher was upheld where that teacher demonstrated performance deficiencies with respect to IEP drafting, compliance with due process requirements, and complying with directives he received over a several-year period. In the other case, the immediate discharge of a school psychologist was

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prairie in a little sod house, and our hams were very big. The oven was not large enough for the ham, so we had to cut the ends off to fit it in the oven." Some would argue that many systems, including education, continue to cut the end off the ham long after the original rationale has passed. Our educational structure is founded on "hams and scraps" from earlier eras. Unquestioned assumptions become the ovens that we cook in.

CAREI wants to help districts with the adaptive change process so that results are sustained over time and improvement is seen throughout the entire system. To that end, we have several exciting professional learning opportunities that will be offered this school year that are aimed at facilitating adaptive change! In December, we will be facilitating Networked Improvement Communities (NIC's) aimed at grouping districts together that are trying to solve similar problems of practice. CAREI will provide data support to these districts and help identify root causes and evaluate the impact of solutions! Check out the CAREI Website at <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/pd.html> for a list of professional learning opportunities and registration information. You should also consider becoming a CAREI member so that you can stay current on cutting-edge research and obtain access to resources to help your system with adaptive change. CAREI members receive a 20% discount on all professional learning opportunities. Please feel free to contact me at kgibbons@umn.edu with any questions you may have! ●

Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (2016). The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups. Rowman & Littlefield.

reduced to a twenty-day unpaid suspension after the psychologist failed to complete approximately one third of his special education evaluation reports prior to the end of the school year and failed to report difficulties in completing the work to his supervisors.

By no means are special education teachers and staff your run-of-the-mill paper pushers. Far from it. However, the paperwork component of the job cannot and should not be shirked. The paperwork is required by state and federal law. It is also often the best evidence a school can produce in a special education dispute. ●

1. Notably, the school district's proposal to update a FAQ document and review requirements for IEP team members with principals and special education teachers was accepted as appropriate corrective action by MDE.

MASE CALENDAR

2018

October 11

MASE Leadership Issues
10 am–2 pm
Benton Sterns Education District

October 24-26

MASE Board of Directors Meeting
MASE New Leaders Cohort - All Leaders #1
Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

October 24-26

MASE Fall Leadership Conference
Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

November 7-8

CASE Fall Board of Directors Meeting
Beau Ridge, Biloxi, MS

November 8-10

CASE Fall Conference
Beau Ridge, Biloxi, MS

November 13

MASE New Leaders Cohort - Director's Only #2
MASE Offices, St. Paul

November 14

Special Education Finance Bootcamp
Bemidji High School
Register at gced.k12.mn.us

November 30

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Meeting
MDE in Conference Center A, Room CC-13

December 6

MASE Board of Directors Meeting
MASE Offices, St. Paul

December 7

Directors' Forum
MDE in Conference Center B

December 14

MASE New Leaders Cohort - All Leaders #2
MASE Offices, St. Paul

2019

January 11

MASE New Leaders Cohort - Director's Only #2
MASE Offices, St. Paul

January 16

Special Education Finance Bootcamp
ISD 287, District Conf. Rm 318
Register at gced.k12.mn.us

January 24

MASE Leadership Issues
10 am–2 pm
Benton Sterns Education District

January 25

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Meeting
MDE in Conference Center A, Room CC-13

January 29-February 2

2019 CEC Convention
Indianapolis, IN

February 13

Special Education Finance Bootcamp
Sourcewell, Conf. Rooms 5 & 6
Register at gced.k12.mn.us

March 6

MASE Board of Directors Meeting
MASE New Leaders Cohort - All Leaders #3
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

March 7-8

MASA/MASE Spring Conference
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

March 21

MASE Day at the Capitol
Best Western Plus Capitol Ridge Hotel, St. Paul

March 22

Directors' Forum
MDE in Conference Center B

April 10

Special Education Finance Bootcamp
South Central Services Coop., Mankato
Register at gced.k12.mn.us

April 26

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Meeting
MDE in Conference Center A, Room CC-13

May 3

Special Education Finance Bootcamp
Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd
Register at gced.k12.mn.us

May 15-17

MASE Best Practices
Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

June 20-21

MASA & MASE Board of Directors Retreats
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

July 1

Membership Renewal

July 7-10

Annual CASE/CEC Legislative Summit
Westin Alexandria, Washington D.C.

October 26-27

CASE Board of Directors Meeting
Louisville, KY Galt House

October 27-29

Joint CASE/NASDSE
Louisville, KY Galt House