



# IMPACT

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

Summer 2019

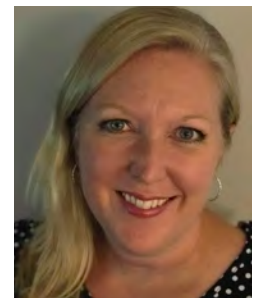
## Top 10 Takeaways

I would like to share some reflections from my year as MASE President that I will call my Top 10 Takeaways.

**10. MASE Board of Director’s excellence and commitment to our mission of building strong leaders who work on behalf of students with disabilities.** Reflecting on the high level of teamwork and collaboration on the board makes me think of the great words of Vince Lombardi, "The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual." Working with and learning from current and past board members has truly been a joy. I am awestruck by each of our board member’s individual dedication and amount of time spent working towards fulfilling our collective mission given the fact that everyone has their own full time administrative job, family, and busy days.

**9. Communication and collaboration between MASE Area Representatives and the Board of Directors.** The role of an Area Representative is incredibly important and is critical to effectively meeting the needs of our members! Each MASE Area Representative attends all of the MASE Board

meetings and gives a report from the area they represent. In addition, the Area Representative convenes MASE area meetings during the year to disseminate information from the MASE Board to area members. The Area Representative also gathers information from area members to bring back to the MASE Board. This network of communication and support keeps the Board of Directors in tune with member needs. Next time you see your Area Representative, please thank them for their work supporting your area!



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

**8. MASE Strategic Plan (MSP).** The focused work and progress on the Strategic Plan spanning the past two years could not have happened without our Area Representatives, Committee Chairs, and Members. From developing the present levels of performance to setting goals and reporting progress, all MASE members were involved in each step. Looking back, I am proud of the work we collectively accomplished and look forward to continued progress on our Strategic Plan.

**7. Committee Chairs, Co-Chairs, and MASE Standing Committee Member Dedication.** I encourage each individual reading this newsletter to get involved with MASE and a great place to start is by serving on a committee. Committee work supports the mission of MASE and the forward motion of the strategic plan. I'd like to give a huge shout out to Committee Chairs and a sincere thank you for their time, dedication, and focused work. Committee membership sign-up is open until July 1. Which one will you sign up for – Business Partnerships, Professional

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*Top 10 Takeaways continued on page 9.*

Special thanks to our 2018-19 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.

**Tier 3**

Edgenuity, Inc.  
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  
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Sourcewell (formerly NJPA)  
SpEd Forms

**Tier 1**

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

## How Did The Year Go?

Any missteps? Any "almost" due process hearings? Any disagreements with co-workers? Were they personal or philosophical and otherwise innocuous disagreements? Any misunderstandings with your superiors? Were there any surprise expenses? Any complaints from your subordinates? Any misquotes in the media? Any angry letters to the superintendent? Did the board question why the cross-subsidy was so high and growing? How did the cabinet meetings go? (Were you chewed out or did you observe someone else catching it?) Any "heart to heart" or "come to Jesus" meetings with your immediate boss or superintendent? Any glowing comments from your boss with one or two minor qualifiers?

My point is you may never know what single event or otherwise innocuous series of events prompts a decision that requires you look elsewhere for employment. All too often we operate from a "no news is good news" perspective and an expectation that if there are concerns about your job performance, someone will be direct with you and let you know. We expect that the chairperson of our board or the superintendent will take us aside and let us know that there are concerns about our performance. Further, you expect that you will be treated similarly to how you treat or work with one of your employees who has had a misstep, that being, a direct conversation in which the concern will be identified. You will allow the employee the opportunity to make the case for their actions. If a change is called for, there will be the creation of a plan as to how to correct it and how to avoid making a similar mistake in the future. The plan will allow for time for the correction, a review mechanism and direct conversation about the steps that may follow should you fail to make the appropriate changes. You may choose to follow all of those steps because the particular contract requires it. You may also choose to follow all of those steps because you believe that is how people should be treated.

Others may not choose to follow this path.

Most special education director contracts are aligned with the length of the teacher contract, typically two years. If you negotiate directly with a board, such as a special education cooperative board, your contract may be shorter or longer or have unique language. The board or administrators leading a school district

or other educational unit may choose to make an administrative change, such as ending your relationship with them. There is very little that can be done while in the midst of the process and after a determination has been made. As such, now is a perfect time to ask for and receive a formal evaluation of your job performance. Some of you reading this article may be surprised to hear that such a formal evaluation process is not universal...it is not.



**John Klaber**  
MASE Executive Director

You may be one of those individuals who has experienced what you believe to be a great relationship with your superior(s). Casual conversations have identified no concerns about your job performance. You and your superior appear to be on the same page regarding decisions made by you on behalf of your district or cooperative. You have not, however, sat through a formal documented evaluation of your job performance. Why would you need to do so? It creates extra work for folks. It's not really necessary. If there was a problem folks would approach you directly and provide you the opportunity to make any necessary corrections. You get along great with your boss!

Everything that I've stated in the previous paragraph may be true, but experience suggests that making an assumption about your job performance is no substitute for a formal evaluation of that job performance. Summer is the perfect time. Insist on that evaluation! ●

### 2019 CASE/NASDSE Conference

October 27-29, 2019

Louisville, Kentucky

Registration information at [www.casecec.org](http://www.casecec.org)



**MASE IMPACT**  
**Summer 2019**

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**2018-19 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Director of Special Services, Eastern Carver County Schools

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Area H (18-20)

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MASA Component Group Representatives:

**Janell Bullard (18-19)**  
Director of Special Education, MAWSECO

**Renae Ouillette (2017-20)**

Exec. Director of Student Services, Lakeville Area Public Schools

Retiree Representative (17-19)

**Nan Records**

National CASE Liaison (18-20)

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Executive Director, Goodhue County Education District

MNCEC Liaison (13-19)

**Marcy Doud**  
Director of Specialized Services, Saint Paul Public Schools

Executive Director

**John Klaber**

**2019-20 MASE Committee Sign-Ups**

The MASE Committee sign-up form is now available at: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/masecommittees1819](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/masecommittees1819)

**The sign-up will close at 4 pm on July 1, 2019.**

Committee terms are for one year. If you are currently serving on a committee and wish to serve again, please re-register - you will not automatically be placed on your current committee. Please refer to the 2018-19 MASE committee list at [www.mnase.org/committees](http://www.mnase.org/committees) if you are unsure of your current committee standing.

**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 keep your MASE benefits and services coming to you). Please give Deb a call at (651) 645-6272 or (866) 444-5251 or email [members@mnasa.org](mailto:members@mnasa.org). Deb will update your records. If you have new colleagues in your area who are not MASE members, please let us know and we will send membership information to them.



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**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@mnasa.org](mailto:dchristians@mnasa.org).

## MASE Election Results

Congratulations to the following candidates who have been elected to MASE leadership positions. MASE appreciates these leaders for their commitment to MASE and Minnesota education and offers them thanks and best wishes as they begin their terms of service!



**Sarah Mittelstadt**  
Director of Special Services  
Southern Plains Education  
Cooperative  
MASE President-Elect Nominee

### **President-Elect (19-20)**

Sarah Mittelstadt, Director of Special Services, Southern Plains Education Cooperative

### **Treasurer (19-21)**

Scott Masten, Director of Special Education, Lake Agassiz Special Education Cooperative

### **Area B (Region 7) (19-21)**

Jason Crane, Director of Special Services, Duluth Schools

### **Area D (Regions 5 & 6) (17-21)**

Jamie Nord, Executive Director, St. Croix River Education District

### **Area E (Region 3) (19-20)**

Melissa Hanson, Director of Special Education, SWWC Service Cooperative

### **Area F-I (Region 2) (19-21)**

Deanna Gronseth, Assistant Director of Special Education, Waseca Public Schools

### **Area G (Region 9E) (19-21)**

Tricia Hughes, Director of Student Services, N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District

### **Retiree Representative (17-21)**

Nan Records, Regional Low Incidence Facilitator, Sourcewell, MASE Retiree



**Scott Masten**  
Director of Special Education  
Lake Agassiz Special Education  
Cooperative  
MASE Treasurer Nominee

## Exciting news -- your membership is now online!

This year, when you join or renew your MASA and/or MASE membership(s), the membership materials will be online. The new platform offers a number of advantages:

- It's paperless, always a good thing.
- It's convenient. Arrange your membership(s) anywhere, anytime. No need to keep track of your materials. Just sign in and you are all set to go.
- It's efficient. Once you complete your membership materials, your membership benefits are immediately in force and your contact data is included in the member directory.
- It's accurate. You access and fill in your own data. You can even make changes as they occur.
- It's secure. You access your member account using your email and password, and, except for the member directory, that information remains private. Our data back-up will be constant so there will be no chance of losing your membership record.
- Your dues will be paid online, too. You may use a credit card, PayPal, or choose to be billed.

**Renew your membership online today at <https://events.resultsathand.com/membership/931>**

## Making the Grade: Ensuring Nondiscrimination when Assigning Grades to Students with Disabilities

The end of the school year is here and that means it's report card time! For teachers and students alike, the documenting of student achievement at the close of the year can bring on feelings of pressure and anxiety. Particularly for special education professionals, it is important that student achievement is documented and communicated appropriately. To ensure that school grade reporting is done in a non-discriminatory manner, special care must be given to follow school policies regarding assigning grades and sending report cards home to special education students and their parents.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Act ("IDEA"), parents must receive written information about their students' progress toward IEP goals and objectives. The IDEA also sets forth a number of parental rights, including a parent's right to receive reports about their child's progress in special education. Federal law does not require any particular form that progress reports must take, nor does it dictate the precise content that must be included in the documentation of progress toward IEP goals. Pursuant to the IDEA, however, IEPs must contain specifics regarding the disclosure of periodic progress reports such as when and how they will be provided. For example, an IEP might provide that progress reports will be provided on a quarterly basis or along with the student's report cards. Along with deciding how to measure progress toward goals, a student's IEP team should also decide how progress will be reported.

When assigning and disclosing grades for students with disabilities, there are a few of the special considerations school personnel should keep in mind:

1. **Do not modify grades based solely on a student's disability status.** School personnel should assign grades to students with disabilities in the same manner as they assign grades to other students taking the same course. Grades may only be modified if a student's IEP team determines that the student should be graded on the student's individual level of performance and this accommodation is documented in the student's IEP.
2. **Use caution when including additional information on the report cards of students**

**with disabilities.** Report cards for special education students need to be at least as informative and effective as the report cards provided for students without disabilities. School personnel, however, should take care to avoid including information that could be perceived as labeling or discrediting a special education student. It is therefore a best practice for schools to issue report cards using the same system and format for all students. Report cards may note that a student is receiving special education or related services, as long as the report card informs parents of their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, or curriculum. It is imperative that any special education designation on a report card is accompanied by a meaningful explanation of the student's progress, such as a grade or some other evaluative standard. Notation of a student's special education status without addressing the student's progress could be considered inconsistent with the state and federal nondiscrimination laws, including Section 504 of the 1973 ("Section 504"). *In re: Report Cards and Transcripts for Students with Disabilities*, 51 IDELR 50 (OCR 2008).

3. **Do not disclose a student's disability on a transcript.** Noting a student's special education status on a transcript may also violate state and



Laura Tubbs Booth  
Attorney & Partner  
Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, P.A.



Christian R. Shafer  
Attorney  
Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, P.A.



Elizabeth M. Meske  
Attorney  
Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, P.A.

**Legal Notes continued on page 7.**

# MASE

# retirements

**Diane McCarron**, Director of Special Education, SWWC Service Cooperative

**Michele Mogen**, Assistant Director of Special Education, Bemidji Regional Interdistrict Council

**Robert Tews**, Superintendent, Cedar Mountain Schools, Joint MASE/MASA Member

Thank you for your service to education and congratulations on your retirement!

## Legal Notes from page 6.

federal nondiscrimination laws. ***In re: Report Cards and Transcripts for Students with Disabilities***, 51 IDELR 50 (OCR 2008). For similar reasons, schools should avoid using special education-specific descriptors on a transcript such as “resource room” or “homebound instruction.” Instead, transcripts for special education students generally may contain terms that are applicable to students without disabilities as well, such as “basic” and “independent study.” Furthermore, school personnel should avoid including on a student’s transcript any reference to accommodations that the student may use when participating in the general curriculum. For example, transcripts should not note that a special education student received additional time when taking exams or used Braille materials in a particular course. The standards for determining what may be disclosed on a student’s transcript, as opposed to a report card, are significantly more stringent. This is because transcripts may be shared with potential employers or postsecondary institutions. Accordingly, it is imperative that transcripts do not disclose the existence of a disability.

- 4. When using a weighted grading system, ensure objectivity.** While schools may not categorically restrict a student’s access to the honor roll based on either the student’s disability status or his or her enrollment in special education courses, the Office of Civil Rights generally permits schools to utilize weighted grading systems to establish grade point averages used determine things like honor roll status or class rank. However, this is only permissible if the weighted grading system is based on objective rating criteria. It is not permissible for schools to use a weighted grading system that arbitrarily assigns lower grade weights

to all special education courses as this would be discriminatory. Instead, schools must evaluate the level of difficulty and the student’s level of academic achievement using objective criteria.

- 5. Special education students may earn a diploma without completing regularly required courses.** Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.04, a student with a disability who satisfactorily attains the objectives set forth in his or her IEP must be granted a high school diploma that is identical to the diploma granted to a student without a disability.

These issues present fact-specific inquiries that require case-by-case analysis. To the extent that questions arise regarding the assignment of or reporting of grades for students with disabilities, be sure to consult with legal counsel. ●



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# SPRING CONFERENCE

# thank-you

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2019 MASA/MASE Spring Conference a success!



## Spring Conference Speaker, Shane Safir Video Now Available on the MASA YouTube Channel

Those of you who attended the MASA/MASE Spring Conference heard our keynote presenter Shane Safir present her work, *The Listening Leader ~ Creating the Conditions for Equitable School Transformation*. Shane has very generously given us permission to share the video of her keynote presentation and we are very grateful to Lifetouch for the work of their expert videographer Brian Dellis.

Find the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyIVgxMW9IA>

The video features the entire presentation, including the conversation prompts. Use this for your own review and reflection, or for a group activity. Through the powerful practice of listening and an unwavering commitment to equity, we can dare to reimagine our schools as places of opportunity for every student. This video will help you creatively tackle complex equity challenges through:

Listening deeply and strategically to colleagues, families, and students.

Cultivating relational capital—the interpersonal currency that fuels school transformation.

Addressing structural barriers, interrupting unconscious biases, and changing the conversation about equity.

Fostering a thriving culture of improvement that promotes leadership at all levels of your organization.

Here are some additional resources:

The slides for this presentation (pdf format) are available on the MASA web site: <http://bit.ly/2XBwIYs>

Link to get a free copy of the first chapter of *The Listening Leader* at [www.shanesafir.com](http://www.shanesafir.com).

Links for ordering Shane's book, *The Listening Leader* [www.shanesafir.com/get-my-book](http://www.shanesafir.com/get-my-book).

## Save the Date! 2020 MASA/MASE Spring Conference

March 12-13, 2020

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest  
Brooklyn Park, MN



## SAVE THE DATE!

2019 MASE Fall Leadership  
Conference

October 23-25, 2019

Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

## 2019-20 MASE New Leaders Cohort

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

Watch your inbox for registration information soon!



## Top 10 Takeaways from page 1.

Development, Nominating, Membership, Legislative, Federal Advocacy, and/or Strategic Planning?

### **6. MASE Member's advocacy and participation.**

MASE is organized to promote professional leadership, provide the opportunity for study of problems common to its members, and to communicate, through discussion and publications, information that will develop improved services for children with disabilities. Whether you are an administrator, a teacher leader, higher education professor, or private consultant we value your membership and activism in the organization. Thank you for participating in area/region meetings, attending MASE Day at the Capitol, attending or presenting at one of the MASE conferences. As Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Also, please remember, it is time to renew your membership by using the new online process (membership year starts July 1).

### **5. MASE sponsored professional development opportunities.**

One of MASE's purposes is to foster high quality programs of professional development for members, to make studies of selected programs that relate to services to children with disabilities, improving the leadership of administrators for special education and to be active in the legislative process. What a year of professional development MASE had this year! The Finance Boot Camp (led by Cherie Johnson, Todd Travis, Renae Ouillette and Marcy Doud) was offered throughout the state this year. In reviewing feedback surveys completed by 96 participants, 100% would recommend the training for their business director and over 94% strongly agreed the training included critical finance components for directors of special education. Another shout out to our MASE Professional Development Committee, led by Co-Chairs Melanie Kray and Holle Spessard. We had a hugely successful Fall Conference, joint conference with MASA in March, and Best Practices Conference in May that even sold out and was our highest attended Best Practices conference ever!

**4. MASE office leadership team.** I can't say enough good things about those who serve as the backbone of MASE - Mia Urick and her team Dave Christians, Stephanie Kastanos, Jeanna Vohnoutka, and Deb Larson. It is amazing to realize the amount of knowledge, history, guidance, organization, and management these individuals do on behalf of our organization.

**3. Our Executive Director, John Klaber.** Wow, just

wow! A few MASE presidents before me have shared their experiences prior to the organization having an executive director. John provides consistency in communications and advocacy, year to year. He has definitely established himself as the face of MASE! John has been a master at establishing positive relationships with various stakeholders both in Minnesota and federally, and is continually present and engaged in moving the MASE mission forward.

**2. Elevating our profession.** Last newsletter, I wrote about the power and importance of elevating our profession. As I reflect on this year, I see our members striving for this goal on a regular basis. Many more Grow Your Own programs have started or are in the planning phases. A new Work to Learn cohort in my area (SouthWest Metro) has gained a lot of attraction and interest. It is exciting to see paraprofessionals and general education teachers wanting to earn their special education teaching degree. I am also excited to give you an update on my own daughter, a soon-to-be graduated senior. After experiences supporting young adults with disabilities, participating in Special Olympics Unified Programs, and growing up with a very close cousin with disabilities, she has decided this is the profession for her and enrolled in a Minnesota university to pursue her special education teaching degree. I couldn't be more proud of her and look forward to watching her grow and learn more about our great profession - and make a difference in the lives of young learners with disabilities.

**1. Gratitude.** It has been an honor to serve the membership this year in the role of President for MASE. I will forever be grateful for this opportunity and treasure the networks of colleagues and friends in our organization. I wish each of you a terrific summer and look forward to seeing you at the Fall Conference or a MASE committee meeting next year. ●

# LEGISLATIVE *update*

The curtain has fallen on the 2019 legislative session and the news is generally good in the education sphere. The regular session ended without a complete agreement on funding and policy changes across all the budget areas, making a one-day special session to wrap things up necessary. The final education bill closely resembles that proposed by Governor Walz in his budget proposal released in January, although the budget target is between \$130 million and \$160 million below what he recommended. Highlights of the bill are:

- A two-percent increase in the general education basic formula in each year of the biennium. The Governor's original budget called for a 3% increase in the first year with an additional two-percent increase in the second. Settling at 2% and 2% shaved over \$100 million from the Governor's initial offering.
- \$90 million in special education cross-subsidy aid that aims to hold the cross-subsidy constant for school districts throughout the state. This was part of the Governor's recommendation.
- \$46 million to maintain the early childhood education slots that were created in 2017 as part of the School Readiness Plus program. That program was set to expire and the funding for it needed to be extended. This was also part of the Governor's recommendation.
- \$30 million for school safety improvements (either through facility improvements or safety-related personnel costs) contingent on the state budget finishing in a surplus at the end of the fiscal year.

There were also some changes in language that deal with special education paperwork, but the changes fall far short of the work undertaken by the New Ulm Public Schools in developing a set of five recommendations to help ease the paperwork burden experienced by special education staff. The recommendations adopted were:

- Parents may object to a specific part of a proposed action and the meeting may consist of the members of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team that are appropriate to that specific portion of the IEP.
- Districts must set a meeting date for conciliation ten days after a parent requests a meeting and not

ten days from when the parent lodges a complaint.

- Instruction to the Commissioner of Education to amend state rules to allow, but not require, districts to report student performance on statewide or districtwide achievement as part of an IEP.



**Brad Lundell**  
MASE Lobbyist

There were other proposals from the New Ulm work that were discussed, including the elimination of short-term objectives with parental approval and allowing a functional behavior assessment to be conducted as a stand-alone and not part of a comprehensive evaluation, but those fell by the wayside.

An item that MASE worked on during the session was expanding eligibility for students with a disability that is not related to services they would receive under Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services (ADSIS). Unfortunately, because of how ADSIS revenue is folded into a district's special education base funding, there was a cost associated with the provision and it was not adopted.

There was also a provision in the House bill that would have funded eight hours of the currently-required training for special education paraprofessionals, but that, along with most of the grant proposals in both the House and Senate bills, did not survive the conference committee proceedings as almost the entire final agreed-to target went into the four provisions I mentioned earlier.

I want to thank MASE leadership, staff, and membership for all the support they gave me in my efforts during the 2019 session. As you can see, there is still much left to accomplish. While the cross-subsidy was addressed, there still needs to be considerable discussion of the special education formula. Further, there will always be discussions surrounding the special education paperwork issue. Please let me know your thoughts as MASE prepares for the 2020 session. 2020 is a perfect year for a perfect vision!

I can be reached at either 612-220-7459 or [lundelllegislative31@gmail.com](mailto:lundelllegislative31@gmail.com). ●

# RESEARCH TO *practice*

## Unpacking Chronic Absenteeism through Networked Improvement Communities

It is estimated among K-12 students in the United States, roughly 5-7.5 million are chronically absent (i.e. missing 10% or more school days) each year<sup>1</sup>. Missing 10 percent of instructional time has a significant impact on student outcomes such as math and literacy achievement, on-time graduation, and postsecondary enrollment<sup>2</sup>. Given these outcomes, 36 states and the District of Columbia have adopted chronic absenteeism as a School Quality or Student Success indicator in their Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan.

Minnesota is among the states that selected chronic absenteeism as an ESSA indicator. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) identified consistent attendance as a school quality indicator, which is defined as attending more than 90% of school days (MDE, 2018<sup>3</sup>). Since MDE began gathering data on chronic absenteeism in 2011, consistently 12-13% of students in grades 1-12 have been absent for more than 10% of school days (MDE, 2018<sup>4</sup>). Disparities in absenteeism rates are observed by racial and ethnic background, income, and special education status.

Many districts and schools grapple with how to determine the scope of the issue among their students, identify root causes, implement improvement strategies, and evaluate impact. The use of Networked Improvement Communities offers a framework for support. NICs are collaborative research-practice partnerships that function as scientific learning communities where participants come together to understand and identify a problem that is common across settings, identify root causes for the problem, and engage in rapid cycles of design, implementation, testing, and redesign to develop solutions<sup>5</sup>.

During this school year, the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota partnered with nine school districts (including two online schools), to identify chronic absenteeism rates PreK-12 overall and among subgroups. In addition to understanding prevalence rates, participants unpacked root causes for absenteeism related to student or family reasons as well as system contributors at the school, district and county level. The districts and schools were then supported in identifying priorities and developing

action plans to address barriers to consistent attendance. Participants had the opportunity to learn from other colleagues about barriers as well as potential strategies to improve attendance within their settings. The districts and schools will test-out the effectiveness of the action plans and interventions during the upcoming school year and plan to share progress during principal meetings.

While chronic absenteeism presents a challenge for educators, it is alterable at the student and system-level when interventions are appropriately targeted and matched to student needs. The support of a networked improvement community provides the perfect environment for educators to determine strategies that will meet student needs.

We anticipate hosting another Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism NIC during the 2019-20 school year. For more information regarding attendance/chronic absenteeism NICs contact Kim Gibbons at [KGibbons@umn.edu](mailto:KGibbons@umn.edu). ●



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## Speech Therapy Shortage: Working Forward

**M**y name is Nancy Thul and I have been a Speech Language Pathologist for 34 years. I would like to address the speech therapy shortage and how we can all work together to solve this. I am currently the Speech Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) Program Director at Alexandria Technical and Community College. I think there are probably a few of you that did not know that we had this type of program in our state. As an FYI, we are the only SLPA program in the state and we are completely ONLINE. There are currently 25 SLPA programs in the United States so the concept of utilizing SLPA's is fairly new and gaining more and more ground every year. It is an excellent way to put highly qualified people in front of our children with communication disorders.



**Nancy Thul, MS  
CCC-SLP**  
SLPA Program Director/  
Instructor  
Alexandria Technical and  
Community College

Here are some things that you should know:

- The program is **COMPLETELY ONLINE** and our students come to us from all over the state.
- In the state of Minnesota, a licensed SLP can supervise one SLPA. For many rural areas and some metro areas, caseloads are very high. When schools cannot attract an Speech Language Pathologist this may be a very good option since the SLPA is already **trained** in how to do therapy. Along with this they are also trained in: scheduling and can efficiently use Sped Forms which will help alleviate the extreme amount of paperwork that an SLP has to complete as part of their job. Please keep in mind that when a school choses to hire someone with little or no training and call them an SLPA, this put even more burden on the supervising SLP because they will now become responsible for teaching the employee HOW to do therapy and how to complete the sped form paperwork. It is like adding another job to their extremely busy job. I get many questions about hiring an candidate that has a bachelor's degree in Communication Science Disorders. Keep in mind that these graduates, all though they may

be good people, they have had, for the most part only theory and have not learned HOW to do therapy. It is equivalent to hiring a first grade teacher who has an education degree but has never student taught.

- Many schools who are not finding a qualified SLP to fill a position are choosing to "home grow" a Speech Language Pathology Assistant. The person they usually choose is a para or substitute teacher within their district, who has been a good employee one that they know will remain in the community because they i.e. own a home and/or have kids who attend school in that particular district.
- An SLPA will need to be supervised by a licensed SLP. The ratio in the state of Minnesota is one SLPA for one SLP.
- SLPA's are trained to do articulation therapy, language therapy, and stuttering therapy plus treat students that are: on the Autism spectrum, students with augmentative communication devices (they can also help program these devices). ●

# MASE CALENDAR

## 2019

### 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.

### September 6

**Directors' Forum**  
MDE in Conference Center B, Room 15-16

### September 20

**Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**  
MDE in Conference Center A, Room 13

### October 23

**MASE Board of Directors Meeting**  
**MASE New Leaders Training**  
Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

### October 23-25

**MASE Fall Leadership Conference**  
Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

### October 26-27

**CASE Board of Directors Meeting**  
Louisville, KY Galt House

### October 27-29

**Joint CASE/NASDSE**  
Louisville, KY Galt House

### November 22

**Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**  
MDE in Conference Center A, Room 13

### December 5

**MASE Board of Directors Meeting**  
MASE Offices, St. Paul

### December 6

**Directors' Forum**  
MDE in Conference Center B, Room 15-16

## 2020

### January 24

**Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**  
MDE Conference Center A, Room 13

### February 5-8

**CEC Convention and Expo**  
Portland, Oregon

### March 6

**Special Education Directors' Forum**  
MDE Conference Center B, Room 15-16

### March 11

**MASE Board of Directors Meeting**  
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

### March 12-13

**MASA/MASE Spring Conference**  
Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

### May 8

**Special Education Directors' Forum**  
MDE Conference Center B, Room 15-16

### May 13-15

**MASE Best Practices Conference**  
Madden's Conference Center, Brainerd

### April 17

**Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**  
MDE Conference Center A, Room 13

### July 1

**Membership Renewal**



The Stenswick Benson Scholarship Award Program began in February of 1991 through MASE (Minnesota Administrators for Special Education). Its purpose is to recognize the legacy of the many leaders within Special Education represented by Ellsworth Stenswick and Loren Benson through a scholarship award to an individual completing exemplary graduate study in the field of special education. Candidates must be in a private or

public Minnesota graduate program leading to special education licensure. The 2019 scholarship committee is pleased to announce this year's recipients:

**Erin Nelson**, Edina, St. Mary's University of Minnesota, Director License

**Krista McElligott**, South Washington County Schools, St. Mary's University, Director License

**Larry Syverson**, Rocori, St. Cloud State University, Director License

**Tiffany Kanz**, Edina, Minnesota State University Mankato, Director License

Thank you to committee chair **Shannon Erickson**, Director of Special Education, Fergus Falls Area Special Education Cooperative and the selection committee!