



IMPACT

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

Spring 2018

Growing and Creating New Beginnings

It's been a difficult week. From the sadness we feel for students, staff and families in Florida to our own worlds, I could provide a lengthy list of challenges that arrive daily by email and phone...but we all know what they are.

At the end of the week, I left the office Friday with a heavy heart. But when I got home, I opened my mailbox and there it was, in all of its colorful glory: the first seed catalogue of the year!

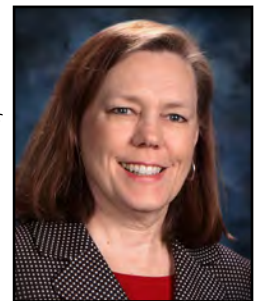
Seed catalogues are a metaphor for me. Seed catalogues provide opportunity, potential growth, and new beginnings. In the cold days of winter, despite darkness, we can imagine sunshine and straight, beautiful rows of flowers, the smell of bright green basil, and the taste of a fresh garden tomato.

The seed catalogue in my mailbox reminds me that even in these dark days we all have the opportunity for beginnings and potential growth.

So what can we do to grow and create some new beginnings:

- We can make sure we are recognizing and celebrating the learning and growth happening

in our new teachers and new administrators. Create sunshine by sending a thank you or an encouraging note of effort recognized. Or better yet, meet face to face and tell people how much they are appreciated.



Diane McCarron
MASE President
Director of Special Education
SWWC Service Cooperative

- We can go out to the career fairs in our high schools and share with the young people the potential career opportunities available in the field of special education. Who are the key people in each district that guide students toward careers? Let's find them and guide them to share our special education opportunities.
- We can make time in our busy schedules to participate in the MASE Day at the Capital on March 6, 2018 to advocate for our educational platform with the members of the legislature.
- We can sign up for the MASE/MASA conference - Personalized Leadership Learning - on March 8-9 at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest in Brooklyn Park. Register online at: www.mnase.org
- We can plan on attending the MASE Best Practices Conference May 9-11 at Madden's in Brainerd to provide ourselves with the opportunity to continue our own professional growth and share experiences with colleagues.

Winter is long and our jobs are challenging, but seeds planted now can provide growth in your own life and career and enhance this beautiful garden we all share. ●

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BUSINESS

partners

Special thanks to our 2017-18 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
Voyager Sopris Learning

Tier 2

Booth Law Group PLLC
Knutson, Flynn & Deans, P.A.
Ratwik, Roszak, & Maloney, PA
SpEd Forms

Tier 1

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Indigo Education
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Public Consulting Group
Robert W. Baird & Co., Inc.
Rupp, Anderson, Squires & Waldspurger, P.A.
Speech Partners
Strategic Staffing Solutions
Transition Assessments and Curriculum
UCP/Infinitec
University of St. Thomas, Department of Special & Gifted Education

Legislative Engagement

It's the middle of winter, as if you needed to be reminded of that fact, and the Minnesota State Legislature is just getting started on addressing the needs and wants of its citizens. Hopefully that includes a focus on the financial challenges we face delivering services to the students of Minnesota. I typically don't plan on starting a newsletter article talking about money, but it may be the hottest of educational topics at the legislature. We are hearing that members on both sides of the aisle, the governor's administration, and the various advocacy groups are referencing special education costs, cross-subsidy and equity concerns. Finances have also been a hot topic among our members, both in how to access more resources and also how to navigate the financial morass that is the new special education funding structure. The former is something that together with our allies we will address with our legislators. The latter will be addressed by a soon to be announced series of financial management trainings being planned by some of the brightest and most knowledgeable of our members. Our primary goal as an organization is to meet your needs as members by providing you with training opportunities designed to bolster your knowledge of the intricacies of the new special education funding structure. Our plan is to make these trainings available to you, your staff, your business manager, and yes, even your superintendent.

Referencing the 2018 legislative session allows me to speak more broadly of the importance of impacting the political and governmental structures. From my experience as a special education director, and reinforced by conversations with many of you, I believe that we should consider broadening our political outreach. Your task of delivering services to students with disabilities is impacted by various governmental entities. We visit with our congressional delegation and their staff. Each year we meet with staff from the United States Department of Education to share how their actions impact our ability to support students. We have our MASE Day at the Capitol. We engage directors and department leaders at the Minnesota Department of Education. All of these activities are of critical importance, but we are missing an entity with which we have almost constant interaction: the 87 counties of Minnesota.

So much of what we do with preschoolers and soon to be graduates is impacted by the types and amount of services provided by the resident counties. The

counties play an important role when it comes to providing services and supports to some of our most challenged citizens. Finally, we look to counties to take the lead in addressing the mental health crisis impacting our citizens. Unfortunately, one can not state that there is a universally high degree of support and collaboration coming from



John Klaber
MASE Executive Director

all the counties. It is not uncommon to hear from a director who works with multiple counties of residence comment on disparities between those counties. They will laud the collegial relationship that the district or cooperative has with one county while noting that an equally poor relationship exists with another. They will describe how their staff look forward to meeting with the staff from one county knowing that they will focus first on the shared responsibility to their children, and second on who will cover the expenses. The director will then describe how their office dreads meetings with staff from another county where the ultimate goal of the county staff appears to be how they can move financial responsibility from the county to the school districts. The director will describe planning new and innovative programs eagerly seeking out the county that will strive to be an active participant. By contrast, they will then describe how they have delayed implementing new programming or services concerned that it could be perceived as an opportunity for the county to back away from their current level of supports. Some of you have been fortunate to have a strong collegial relationship with your county or counties. Unfortunately, others have not been as fortunate. The reality is we must recognize the significant impact that counties have on our ability to deliver services to our students.

I want to propose that if you have not already done so, you work on establishing a relationship with your county commissioners. I certainly did not advocate that my school district focus on the counties we served. I did raise concerns with county leadership, but could barely remember the names of more than a handful of commissioners. I encourage you to reach out to the commissioners, invite them to legislative meetings, and

Legislative Engagement continued on page 5.

MASE IMPACT
Spring 2018

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Save the Date!

MASE Day at the Capitol
Tuesday, March 6, 2018

The day will begin with a breakfast and legislative meeting starting at 8:30 am at the Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Paul Downtown 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!



Do you know why nearly 95% of MN districts and charter schools use SpEd Forms software? If not, maybe it's time you check us out.

www.spedforms.com

Save the Date!



MASE
Best Practices
May 9-11, 2018
Madden's Resort, Brainerd

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.

MASE Legislative Resources

The 2018 Legislative Session reconvened on Tuesday, February 20! 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

Legislative Engagement from page 3.

share with them the importance of the services provided by the county. I'd query them at election forums about their position on addressing mental health concerns of children and their families in the county. I'd encourage them to focus more or equally on the emotional, social and physical needs of their citizens and less on the condition of the shoulders on various county roads and where to put the next round about. It seems to me that we may have dropped the ball when it comes to our legislative efforts – government and politics is first and foremost a local process. I encourage you engage in that process.

Don't forget to make an effort to get to your regional meetings. I have a trip to Fergus Falls planned for April and a trip to Mentor in June, meeting my personal goal to make it to every MASE regional meeting in the state, at least once! I also encourage you to attend the MASA/MASE Conference and the MASE Best Practices Conference later this spring.

As always, I welcome your questions, concerns and insights. My goal is to serve you so that you can better serve the children with disabilities in Minnesota.

Spring is coming! ●

2018 MASE Leadership Issues (Formerly "Rural Issues")

**Remaining Meeting Date:
April 26, 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!

Save the Date!

**2018 MASE Fall
Leadership Conference
Wednesday-Friday,
October 24-26, 2018**

Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

*Keep your eyes open for registration,
agenda and lodging details!*

SPRING CONFERENCE

preview

What is your "leadership story?" Whatever leadership path you have followed, it has not been the same experience as that of your friends and colleagues. Just as we no longer understand our students' learning environments as classrooms with rows of desks facing a lecturing teacher, we no longer understand professional learning as one size fits all workshop and conference sessions. Our professional learning resources have grown through the use of technology and expanded networks to present a myriad of philosophies and approaches, providing an improved learning system to meet the diverse needs of our leaders. Perhaps one of the most critical aspects of personalized leadership learning is that we must build the infrastructure ourselves, based on our own needs and vision, and implementing the collegial resources among the members of our learning networks. If we want to build a system that meets the individual needs of our students, we must address the individual learning needs of the adults who serve them. Join your colleagues—members of your own professional learning network—this spring and explore how each of us can personalize our leadership learning!

Highlights

Join us for our ninth annual "**At Ruth's Table**" conversation on Wednesday, March 7. This is an opportunity for education leaders who are women to gather for learning, networking and idea sharing. Attendees are encouraged to bring a guest who is a woman considering a career in education leadership. This is a ticketed event; please register on the conference registration form. *Ruth's Table is made possible through the generous support of Kraus-Anderson Construction Company*



Thursday morning, we will kick off the conference by recognizing our MASE and MASE award recipients. We will also plan our **Edcamp sessions**, an opportunity for all of our participants to design their own conference experience by exploring the topics you determine. We will ask for your ideas—for learning, discussion, sharing, and we will set up facilitated rooms and note sharing for those topics.

Be sure to attend the **Breakout Sessions** to customize your learning and bring home great resources to address your specific areas of interest.

The **Exhibit Fair** is a convenient way to visit with representatives of companies offering the latest products and services. Sign up for the drawings! One lucky participant's district will win a door prize – sign up at each booth to increase your chances. Our Dessert Reception after lunch on Thursday is a great event in the exhibit area, a chance to visit with our friends in business and sample delicious treats.

Play the **"Booth Sleuth" game** and win a prize for your district! Your conference app will include a game and everyone is invited to play. Answer the questions by sleuthing in the exhibit area and you could be the big winner!

Thursday evening from 4:30-6 pm **everyone is invited to attend the Riley Reception**. This event is in honor of our MASA retirees, an opportunity for retirees and others to gather for homecoming and networking. There is no charge and all are welcome. We will have soft drinks, snacks, and a cash bar.

Members who are retiring at the end of this school year and our final award recipients will be honored during the General Session on Friday, March 9. We will also be hearing from the 2018 MASA and MASE officer candidates.

Our Friday keynote speakers are Jim Morris presenting "Dream Makers," and Nick Buettner presenting "Blue Zones."

**2018 MASA/MASE
Spring Conference
Personalized Leadership Learning
March 8-9, 2018
Minneapolis Marriott Northwest
Brooklyn Park, MN
www.regonline.com/2018MASAMASE**

Meet Your Keynote Speakers...



Jim Morris



Nick Buettner

Schedule At-a-Glance

Wednesday, March 7 - Pre-Conference Events

9 am-4 pm MASA Great Start Cohort
MASE New Leaders Cohort
11-4 pm MASA & MASE Board Meetings
12:30-4 pm At Ruth's Table, Women Leader's Workshop
2-5 pm Conference Registration Open
8-10 pm Conference Reception

Thursday, March 8

(Registration open 7:30 am)

8:30-9:30 am Conference Welcome
Awards Presentation
Edcamp Topics
9:45-10:45 am Edcamp Sessions
10:45 am-3:30 pm Exhibits Open
11:15 am-12:15 pm Breakout Sessions I
12:15-1:15 pm Lunch
2-3 & 3:30-4:30 pm Breakout Sessions II & III
4:30-6 pm Riley Reception

Friday, March 9

(Registration open 8 am)

8:30 am-12 pm Awards Presentations
Retiree Recognition
MASA & MASE Officer Candidates
Keynote Speakers:
Jim Morris
Nick Buettner

Congratulations to our 2018 MASE Award Recipients!

MASE Special Education Administrator of the Year Award

Erin Toninato
Director - Region 9
SC Service Cooperative

MASE Legacy Award

Gary Lewis
MASE Retiree

Presented at the MASE Fall Leadership Conference

MASE New Special Education Leader Award

Jennifer McIntyre
Executive Director of Student Services
Bloomington Public Schools

MASE Distinguished Service Award

John Klaber
MASE Executive Director

These individuals are representatives of the leadership excellence found in MASE members: the willingness to risk, strong communication skills, a progressive change agent with high expectations for self and others, and their commitment to shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education for children with disabilities.



Award recipients will be honored during the 2018 MASA/MASE Spring Conference. You can learn more about the awards and the accomplishments of the recipients by reading the press releases available on the MASE website.



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.

Funds have been raised primarily through an auction now held every other year during the Special Education Directors' Fall Conference. The fund started

with \$4500 in 1991 and as of 2018, the endowment is approximately \$241,000.

The Stenswick Benson Scholarship Committee will maintain its current practice of requesting that you identify scholarship candidates during 2018. Please distribute the application to highly qualified individuals you know are pursuing graduate special education studies. MASE, at the recommendation of the Scholarship Committee will offer four (4) \$2,000 awards this spring. We encourage you as Directors of Special Education to recommend a candidate you think deserving of this award.

Candidates must be in a private or public Minnesota graduate program leading to special education licensure. This includes psychology, and any related services as well as teacher licensure. It could also include someone entering the program to obtain Special Education Director licensure. (Note: Students attending non-Minnesota schools will also be eligible if the school the individual is attending is located geographically close to Minnesota). Strong consideration will be given to candidates working to obtain licenses in highest areas of need across Minnesota; regional needs will also be considered when they are different.

Please have the candidate complete their section; the Special Education Director will be responsible to submit the final document for consideration to Shannon Erickson by **April 2, 2018**. If you have questions, contact Shannon Erickson via email at serickson@fergusotters.org. Note that this year application materials can be delivered electronically.

Applications are available at www.mnase.org/stenswickbenon-scholarship.html

MASE Recognitions by CASE

Congratulations to all our MASE members on the work that is done on behalf of special education every day. This exceptional work resulted in MASE being the recipient of several recognitions at the recent Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) meeting in Tampa, Fl. Jill Skarvold, MASE Liaison to CASE, and Diane McCarron, MASE President, were present at the meeting to receive the awards.

MASE was recognized through three awards, two of which pertained to membership. The first award was the national award for the Highest Increase in Membership for 2017. MASE had an increase of 69% in unified membership (those who are members of MASE and CASE). In addition, MASE received recognition for "demonstrating superb and extraordinary member growth strategies" for our organization. The third recognition was the award for Outstanding Special Education Director of the Year presented to Jill Skarvold, who in addition to being the MASE Liaison is the previous Executive Director for Moorhead Area Schools and currently the Regional Specialist for Lakes Country Service Cooperative.



Jill Skarvold
CASE Liaison, MASE

Congratulations to all for the hard work that is done every day by MASE members! ●



Jill Skarvold and Diane McCarron with the CASE recognition award for Member Growth Strategies.



Left: A Certificate of Recognition for Demonstrating Superb and Extraordinary Member Growth Strategies Resulting in Absolutely Amazing Membership Growth of 69%
Right: Jill Skarvold received the award for national Outstanding Director of Special Education from Gary Myrah, CASE President in Tampa, FL.

I am honored to be nominated for the position of President-Elect for the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education. I am humbled yet excited about the possibility of serving as MASE President. I have been a MASE member for many years and served on the Membership and Federal Advocacy Committees. I believe in the MASE mission of building strong leaders who work on behalf of children with disabilities as well as improving the educational outcomes of all children. My "leadership story" includes experiences in both urban and rural settings as a general and special educator, inclusion specialist, and Director of Special Services. I have benefited greatly from being a member of this organization and its mission to serve new and tenured leaders. I embrace service leadership as a core value and will work hard to carry out the mission of the organization.



Cheryl Hall
Director of Special Services
Northfield Public Schools
MASE President-Elect Nominee

My priorities:

- Work collaboratively with members and partner organizations to improve student outcomes as identified in ESSA as aligned with Special Education.
- Continue to partner with Minnesota Department of Education and Higher Education to increase qualified candidates in the field of special education.
- Provide leadership and communication to support the work with legislators towards stable, equitable funding formulas across districts, that are simplified, predictable and consistent.
- Continue to focus on recruiting, developing and supporting new and veteran leaders through exceptional mentoring and professional development opportunities.

The MASE organization, regional partnerships, members, and mentors have helped me to develop the necessary skills and expand my perspectives in this field. It is my sincere hope that as your next MASE President-Elect I will be able to help continue the excellent work of supporting leaders in order to positively impact the educational outcomes for students. It would be an honor to serve as your next President-Elect. ●

It has been my pleasure to hold the position of Secretary on the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education Executive Board during the last term.



Erin Toninato
Region 9 Director
South Central Service
Cooperative
MASE Secretary Nominee

My time as the Secretary has allowed me to learn first-hand, the important work that is done throughout the state. It has provided me with an opportunity to develop a wide perspective regarding special education and to work closely with others who are focused on improving child outcomes and service to students receiving special education.

I appreciate the potential opportunity to continue to serve within the MASE organization and be part of the work that can, and does, have an impact on special education in Minnesota.

I am honored to submit my name for a second term, as a candidate for the Secretary of the MASE Executive Board. I would appreciate your support! ●

Watch your email for the 2018 Election Ballots!



Once again this year's elections will be conducted online. Electronic ballots will be emailed during the week of March 12. Be sure to watch your email for your login information!

MASE Washington D.C. Trip

MASE was well represented on the Hill in 2017! Two visits to Washington D.C. offered opportunities for effective meetings with members of Congress and their legislative staff. Kudos to MASE Executive Director John Klaber for his leadership by representing MASE in a professional and effective manner during our trips to Washington D.C. Over the past years, John has established himself as MASE's credible resource and "go to" person by building positive and professional relationships with representatives and their staff.



Laura Pingry-Kile
 Director of Special Services
 Eastern Carver County
 Schools
 MASE Federal Advocacy
 Committee Co-Chair
 MASE President-Elect

On both visits, MASE advocated for expected outcomes for Minnesota children and youth with disabilities and the professionals who work on their behalf. There were four legislative recommendations discussed with the Minnesota congressional delegation:

1. **Teacher Recruitment:** Our congressional delegation was encouraged to support solutions to our struggle in finding appropriately trained and licensed teachers to serve students with disabilities.

2. **Education Appropriations:** We encouraged our representatives to support the creation of a timetable for the full funding of IDEA.
3. **Medicaid Services and Funding:** We emphasized the extent to which Medicaid payments have supported students with disabilities served in both public and private school settings. Representatives were asked to oppose reductions to Medicaid coverage for children's health services, especially those for children with disabilities and children in poverty.
4. **Keep Public Funds in Public Education:** Our delegation was encouraged to support efforts that maintain and enhance the use of public funds for public education and services offered through public school districts and oppose moving federal funds to private schools. Specifically, they were asked to oppose the use of public funds for parents to access private education through private school vouchers, tuition tax credits, direct tuition payments, taxpayer savings accounts, scholarships, and portability of public funds to private education entities for all students, including students with disabilities, as they are contrary to the best interests of students and their families, the public school system, local communities, and taxpayers. ●

AASA Update: CHIP & IDEA

The MASA Federal Advocacy Committee met in early November and heard from Noelle Ellerson Ng from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in Washington, D.C. Ms. Ellerson Ng shared several initiatives underway at the present time that could significantly impact special education programs and students with disabilities in Minnesota.



Darren Kermes
 Superintendent
 SW Metro Intermediate
 District 288
 MASE Federal Advocacy
 Committee Co-Chair

One specific area of concern raised involves the failure of Congress to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This program provides funds to schools for the medical services they provide students. More than half of the nearly 9 million children served by CHIP are eligible to receive services in school through their state Medicaid

programs. Without CHIP extension, districts will lose funding for the critical health services these children receive.

In terms of Fiscal Year 17 funding, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) receives a \$90 million dollar increase, however this is still at just 16% of the federal share of special education costs. More concerning is the proposed Fiscal Year 18 budget which would cut IDEA and Title I local allocations, as well as Carl D. Perkins (Career/Technical Education), in order to partially pay for a \$1.4 billion dollar increase for school choice/ privatization.

The ultimate message Ms. Ellerson Ng gave was very clear and direct: This is a new day in Washington politics. It is important now more than ever that we build and maintain relationships with our congressional delegation from Minnesota. One great way to make that connection is to reach out to staff in their local offices to have these conversations. ●

How Is It That We Make Decisions?

by Nancy Johnson, Retired Director

Decisions, decisions, decisions. How is it that we make decisions? Do we go on impulse, follow the current trends, do what our friends and colleagues do, or do what is right and maybe not popular? As an administrator, each day is filled with decision-making. Your decisions are related to students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board, community, state and federal regulations and laws. I found it very helpful to determine my own guiding principles for decision-making as a beginning administrator and use them when making decisions.

In my 35 years as a special education teacher, principal, superintendent, and special education director, I had to make decisions every day that would need to be carried out by other people. In order to have a consistent and coherent strategy for decision-making, it is important and helpful to determine your own guiding principles for decision-making. I first needed to write them down and keep them in the forefront each time I considered a decision. They are a global question that should apply to making a good, just and right decision. For example, "Is this decision what is best for the student or students involved for their own safety?" I would also share my guiding principles with the people who would carry out and implement the decision so that they would know the purpose and intent of the decision. After awhile it became second nature to use them as a filter and check to see if what was decided was in line and consistent with my guiding principles. If it wasn't, then either the guiding principle might need changing or the decision might need changing.

Guiding principles are not intended to be inflexible or unchanging. Instead they set your standard for what you consider when making decisions. It is a tool to determine if your decisions are in line with your guiding principles. Clear guiding principles can give you confidence and a strong footing to use in the daily grind of all the possible confusion and chaos that is part of the job. Often I found if I let other factors influence me, it caused trouble and extra headaches for all concerned. Without confidence you feel like you are falling or drowning instead of feeling calm, knowing that you have a strategy to use when you

need it. If you aren't clear about what you stand for and can express that in guiding principles, then it is easy to become confused and blown around by other people and factors, such as who is the loudest person or what is currently trendy and what others are doing.

The expectation of the job is constant movement and constant problems to solve. That is the job and to wish for a calm day or fewer problems is unrealistic. Instead, be ready to enjoy the job and the day with clear guiding principles that will give you confidence and support as you go throughout the day. ●

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IS ABOUT MORE THAN
OFFERING SERVICES.
IT'S ABOUT PROVIDING
A BETTER FUTURE.**

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bethel.edu/special-education



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Assistive Technology

Technology is advancing at a rapid pace. New services, devices, and apps are introduced daily. Many of these advances may result in a demand for assistive technology devices or services. Whether a parent is requesting a simple pencil grip or the latest in interactive software, all assistive technology share a common legal basis.

1. What Constitutes Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is a type of related service under the IDEA. 20 U.S.C. § 1401(26)(a); see also 34 C.F.R. § 300.34(a). Specifically, an assistive technology device is defined as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially or off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability. That term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device, such as a cochlear implant. 20 U.S.C. § 1401(1); see also 34 C.F.R. § 300.5. An assistive technology service is any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. This includes, but is not limited to: the evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability; purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices; and training or technical assistance.

2. When to Conduct an Assistive Technology Assessment

There are no hard and fast rules for determining when to conduct a formal assistive technology assessment. Assistive technology should be considered, however, during a student's initial evaluation and subsequent evaluations. In addition, a student's IEP team must consider whether the student needs assistive technology in developing each IEP. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(3)(B)(v). While this consideration does not require a formal annual assistive technology evaluation or assessment, the team must look at the need for assistive technology in light of the student's IEP goals. As with other IEP components, the team must provide the parents with a prior written notice when amending the IEP

to include assistive technology or refusing a parent's request for assistive technology.

3. Where Assistive Technology is Required

As a related service, assistive technology must be provided, at public expense, when necessary to "assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education." 20 U.S.C. § 1401(26)(a); see also 34 C.F.R. § 300.34(a). A school district's "obligation to provide assistive technology which is necessary to provide a FAPE." *Zigich v. ISD No. 623 Roseville*, Civ. No. 99-1212 (D. Minn. 2000) (unpublished); See also, *Letter to Anonymous*, 24 IDELR 854 (OSEP 1996); *Letter to Fisher*, 23 IDELR 565 (OSEP 1995); *Letter to Naon*, 22 IDELR 888 (OSEP 1995).

In *Andrew F. ex rel. Joseph F. v. Douglas County School Dist. RE-1*, 137 S.Ct. 988 (2017), the Supreme Court adopted a standard that requires each child's educational program to be "appropriately ambitious in light of his circumstances" and grant "every child the chance to meet challenging objectives." Under *Andrew*, it is important that IEP teams not only ensure goals articulated in each student's IEP are appropriately ambitious based on the child's needs but also document the team's rationale for why each goal is ambitious. With respect to assistive technology, this determination is made on a case-by-case basis by examining whether a device or service is necessary for a student to make progress on IEP goals and objectives or otherwise receive a FAPE. 34 C.F.R. § 300.105(b). Schools, however, do not have to provide a device just because a student can benefit from its use. The IDEA does not require schools to maximize a child's educational benefit. See *Board of*



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RESEARCH TO *practice*

Professional Learning Communities for Leaders: Accelerating Learning through Networked Communities

In any type of organization, individual and organizational learning occurs at various interrelated levels. In education, teachers often learn at an individual level as they engage in teaching. As they implement new or existing instructional practices, they reflect on the impact of those practices and make adjustments when necessary. A second type of learning occurs between individuals in a building. A structured example is Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers work together as a team to reflect upon and improve instructional practices. Learning can also occur between buildings and districts.

Recently, a new paradigm, Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) is emerging through the work of the Carnegie Foundation. NICs provide a structure for system leaders to engage with leaders from other districts who are trying to solve similar problems. The premise of a NIC is that when individuals from diverse contexts operate in a shared learning environment, their capacity to implement, evaluate, and refine solutions grows exponentially. We know that millions of educators are engaged in individual learning on a daily basis. Teachers are confronted with classroom problems and experiment with different ways to respond. We also know that many school districts across the country are implementing PLC's and other system initiatives to help teachers learn from each other to improve student outcomes. Many districts are obtaining positive results! In his book "Learning to Improve," Tony Bryk says "We live in separate silos. Much of value is being learned, but it lives and dies with those who have learned it." NICs are focused on breaking down these silos and identify where unusually positive outcomes are occurring and figuring out exactly what is being done to replicate similar outcomes in other contexts.

Now, you may be thinking that there are many organizations and networks of practice that could be considered NIC's. However, consider the defining characteristics of a NIC, and determine whether the networks you belong to meet these characteristics.

- NICs are intentionally designed networks, grounded in improvement science, where

participants have defined roles, responsibilities, and norms for membership.

- NICs are focused on a common well-defined "aim" or problem of practice.
- NICs engage in analyzing the problem to develop hypothesis about why the problem is occurring. This information is used to generate solutions.
- Each member works to develop, evaluate, and refine system improvements.
- Conditions and variations in performance across the network are analyzed allowing participants to see things that even the best individual educator would miss.
- Participants learn from each other about what works and doesn't work in each context.

Comparing results and learning from each other through a NIC creates a sense of "Moral Urgency" and the recognition that if one district can move the needle on an important problem, other districts can and should be able to replicate solutions as well. In contrast, we often see examples of positive outcomes in another district but often discount the data and explain away differences through factors such as better students, more resources, or better conditions.

CAREI is beginning the process of working to establish NIC's for system leaders to tackle common problems of practice. We are moving away from the notion that researchers are "knowers" and school people are "doers" who should simply implement new findings from research to a framework where all players are improvers! Instead of implementing "initiatives" fast and wide, we want to learn fast and implement well in a variety of conditions and contexts. We want to refine quality processes, tools, and relationships to support complex work in



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Ed. of the Hendrick Hudson Sch. Dist. v. Rowley, 458 U.S. 176 (1982). Virtually every student, whether qualified to receive services under IDEA or not, could benefit, to some degree, from some form of assistive technology, such as a laptop computer or IPAD. For similar reasons, schools do not necessarily have to provide the "best," most sophisticated, or most expensive piece of assistive technology if a simpler device or service will meet the student's needs. As with the question of whether to provide the student with assistive technology in the first place, the determination of a specific assistive technology device will be made by the IEP team on a case-by-case basis.

It should be noted that regarding students with hearing, visual, or speech impairment, the Department of Education has stated that merely meeting FAPE under IDEA does not necessarily fulfill a school's obligation under the ADA. The ADA requires schools to, without charge, ensure that communications with students with disabilities is as effective as communication with students without disabilities, giving primary consideration to students and parents in determining which auxiliary aids and services are necessary to provide such effective communication. In other words, for students with hearing, visual, or speech impairments, a school may have to go above and beyond what is necessary for FAPE to meet the requirements of the ADA. (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. (2014). *Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students with Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools*. ●

References: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-faqs-effective-communication-201411.pdf>

PLCs from page 13.

different situations. Finally, we want to stop focusing on generating lists of what works, and instead, figure out what works, where, and why as the new gold standard.

If the idea of belonging to a NIC resonates with you, please give me a call (651.303.4141) or e-mail me at kgibbons@umn.edu. We are working to identify grants that would support this work and give district leaders a unique opportunity to implement solutions together and learn from each other. In addition, CAREI is leading a book study this year on "Learning to Improve," and we plan to offer the book study again next year. ●

1. Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

MASE CALENDAR

2018

March 6

MASE Day at the Capitol

8:30 am-3:15 pm

Meet at the Embassy Suites, St. Paul

March 7

MASE Board of Directors Meeting

MASE New Leaders Cohort Session 4

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

March 8-9

MASA/MASE Spring Conference

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

April 19-22

CEC Convention

Boston, MA

April 19-22

CEC Convention

Boston, MA

April 26

MASE Leadership Issues

10 am-2 pm

Benton-Stearns Education District, Sartell

May 9

MASE New Leaders Cohort Session 5

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

May 9-11

MASE Best Practices Conference

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

June 21-22

MASE Board of Directors Retreat

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

July 1

Membership Renewal

October 24

MASE Board of Directors Meeting

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

October 24-26

MASE Fall Leadership Conference

Cragun's Conference Center, Brainerd

November 8-10

CASE Annual Conference

Biloxi, MS