

Aunt Diane, I Changed My Major to Education

Those words are one more reason I was thankful over Thanksgiving weekend. My niece, who is a freshman in college, had made an important choice in her life and the life of so many future students. She will be a fabulous teacher and leader.

Teacher shortages and declining enrollment in teacher education programs are not new news, but the need to do something about them is urgent.

According to a 2016 national survey of college freshmen¹, the number of students who say they will major in education has reached its lowest point in 45 years with just 4.2 percent intending to major in education compared to 11 percent in 2000; 10 percent in 1990; and 11 percent in 1971, according to data gathered by the UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program.

MASE continues to work to address these issues. What are we doing and what more can we do?

- Pass legislation. **Increase Qualified Special Education Candidates** is one plank of our legislative platform. Check out the 2018 MASE Legislative Platform at www.mnase.org/legislative

- Correct misperceptions that are deterring today's students from choosing to enter the teaching profession. For instance, 75 percent of undergraduates surveyed underestimated teachers' salaries, and 43 percent did not rate teaching as "challenging in a stimulating way," according to McKinsey's report "Closing the Talent Gap."^{2,3}



Diane McCarron

MASE President
Director of Special Education
SWWC Service Cooperative

- Help high school students identify and understand their career values. Communicate about the option of teaching in a way that conveys the profession in a positive light with passionate teachers portrayed as "champions" of their profession.
- Design special programs within high schools. One Minnesota school district is connecting with a nearby college to offer a semester class for junior and senior students in the high school setting to heighten interest in the teaching profession in all areas.
- Portray teaching in ways to attract this generation of creative leaders. "Today's young professional wants to be an agent of change. Many would gladly join a teaching profession that demanded creativity, autonomy, and initiative. Many would jump at a chance to remake classrooms that reflect their own backgrounds, interests, quirks, humor, intellect, and connection to students in a specific community."⁴
- Check out and share the website Teach.org, which helps students explore teaching.

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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, P.A.
SpEd Forms

Tier 1

Bethel University
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Speech Partners
Strategic Staffing Solutions
Transition Assessments and Curriculum
UCP/Infinitec
University of St. Thomas, Department of Special & Gifted Education

The Struggle to Find the Work & Home Life Balance

It happened again last week. A young education professional began the process of turning in their keys to the district and moving on. Unfortunately, not to take on a new position, and not to accept a well earned promotion, but to a new career outside of the field of education. I have known this individual since he first began his administrative career as a newbie, fresh from the classroom, assistant high school principal. It was immediately evident that he was a bright, highly ethical and articulate problem-solver with great leadership potential. His career trajectory took him to a position as the high school principal and most recently for almost three years as a school superintendent. His school district benefited from his leadership as they worked their way out of significant financial challenges. All reports suggest that the school board was highly pleased with his job performance and was in the process of negotiating a new three-year contract. We've visited many times over the years and most recently he expressed frustration that he could not move his school district as far or as quickly forward as he would like. I also sensed that he was feeling challenged to find a work/home balance. Being truly present for his wife and children appeared to be something that was taking a back seat to his job.

I say "again", as this follows a conversation that I recently had with a young, now former special education teacher. As a bit of background, she was born and bred to be a special education teacher. Both of her parents had made careers of serving students with disabilities and her favorite aunt had lived in a group home for girls and women with disabilities since her early teenage years. In her five years of teaching she served low income minority students with disabilities. She initiated a school-wide behavioral intervention program and collaborated with regular education classroom teachers to accommodate for the needs of their struggling students. She had actually observed positive changes in instructional practice within those classrooms. She took the past few years off to stay at home with her young children. She is now at a place in her life where she could return to teaching. Our previous conversations have always included a recognition that she would return to teaching students with disabilities and a tacit recognition on her part that special education paperwork was a necessary evil. That has now changed. She too wants a work/home balance and sees no way that she can do it while placing a priority on the needs of her students and at the same time create mountains of

paperwork. She has options and may return to teaching, just not special education although other potential career opportunities are opening up to her.

The two career paths are quite different, but the outcome is the same. Our profession has potentially lost two bright and committed individuals. These are folks who have and could continue to positively impact the lives of many students. We can ill-afford to lose them, but lose them, I believe we have. They will continue to be positive contributors to their families and their communities. Unfortunately, that community connection may not include the schools.

When I get out to our regional meetings later this winter and spring, I intend that we include in our discussions your thoughts, ideas, plans, stories about how you are attempting to retain the best and brightest to our profession. I will make a point of sharing between regions those actions that you believe have had a positive impact. If there is an opportunity for legislative answers to some of the challenges, I will advocate on your behalf for them. Most importantly, I will keep the staffing challenges that you face at the forefront of my conversations with state-level leaders. Please consider making this conversation an ongoing part of your regional meetings. ●



John Klaber
MASE Executive Director

Aunt Diane from page 1.

As we know, the highest achievement in education lies not in the amount of content absorbed, but in the number of minds awakened and inspired. Let's all work, in every creative way we can, to awaken an interest in teaching and inspire more passionate young people to embrace education as a career, so we can all hear more often, "I am majoring in education!" ●

1. <http://chronicle.com/interactives/freshmen-survey>
2. <https://mckinseysociety.com/closing-the-talent-gap/>
3. <https://www.good.is/articles/four-smart-ways-to-attract-college-students-to-teaching>
4. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/11/20/why-todays-college-students-dont-want-to-be-teachers/?utm_term=.6248f4e923e6

MASE IMPACT
Winter 2017

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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 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 2:30 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.

FALL CONFERENCE

thank-you



**cultivating
intentional
optimism &
resilience**

SAVE THE DATE

2018 MASA/MASE Spring Conference

Thursday-Friday

March 8-9, 2018

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

More information to come!

Thank you to everyone who made our 2017 MASE Fall Leadership Conference a great success! We had three wonderful days of learning, networking, and fun.

Presentations and handouts from the 2017 MASE Fall Leadership Conference are now available online at www.mnase.org/fall-conference-handouts.

Congratulations to Area B (Da Bears), winners of the coveted Wine Tasting Trophy!

A special congratulations goes out to Keith Erickson, Retired Director of Special Services for the Albert Lea Area School District, who received the 2017 MASE Legacy Award! You can read the full news release on the MASE website.

Thanks to all who participated in the fundraising events — because of your participation, we raised \$8,421 for the Stenswick-Benson Scholarship Fund! Learn more about the Stenswick-Benson Scholarship Fund on the MASE website.

And thanks to our business partners and exhibitors for their valued support!

Special thank you to our 2017 Fall Leadership Conference Exhibitors!

Bethel University
Grand Canyon University
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Kennedy & Graven
Lexie Learning
Minnesota Speech Hearing Association
PCG Education
PresenceLearning
SpEd Forms, Inc.
Speech Partners
Strategic Staffing Solutions
The Language Express, Inc.
Transition Assessments and Curriculum
UCP/Infinitec
University of MN
Voyager Sopris Learning

MASE Input on Legislative Issues at CASE Board Meeting

Just as MASE provides leadership and support to our members in Minnesota, the Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE) does the same at the national level in order to shape policies and practices that impact the quality of education for students. CASE brings together representatives from the state chapters (in Minnesota, our MASE organization) to provide input and guidance to the work that needs to be done. In November, Laura Pingry-Kile and I attended the CASE Board meeting at which almost all states were represented.



Jill Skarvold
CASE Liaison, MASE

During the board meeting, one of the areas discussed was the CASE Legislative Platform. Even though IDEA may not be on the table right now to reauthorize (what's a few more years?), CASE has worked with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) to bring together other partners (such as principal, school psychologist, superintendent, school board organizations as well as many others) to coalesce around important recommendations. When Congress begins this critical work, a set of recommendations from a comprehensive set of partners

will be ready. The key issues that are part of the Legislative Platform for CASE are:

- Ensuring IDEA protections for students yet acknowledging that paperwork reduction and a decreased focus on compliance are essential as we still work to be accountable under the law.
- Funding of IDEA, beginning with restoring funding to the levels states and districts received under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- Changing maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements focused on ensuring appropriate services are provided, rather than on the specific amount expended, as well as recommending additional exceptions than currently allowed under MOE.
- Accessing increased Medicaid funds to offset high costs incurred.
- Supporting access to mental health services that are coordinated with community providers.
- Supporting early childhood education with increased funding for comprehensive and coordinated system with inclusive programming for all children with disabilities.

CASE Board Meeting continued on page 7.

CASE Winter Hybrid Conference

CASE is holding a conference March 8-9, 2018 on Data Driving Accountability: Actualizing the Promise through Practice. For many of us, it's hard to get away for several days to an out of state conference! However, the Winter Conference is a HYBRID conference, enabling people to still attend via a virtual link to the conference. And, to make the conference even more accessible, if you can't attend a hybrid conference on March 8-9, you can purchase a CD-ROM and experience the conference at a later time and as many times with different groups as you want!

The speakers leading the conference will be Julie Weatherly, Esq. and Dr. Randy Sprick. Consider holding a hybrid conference in your district or region! The price is per site, enabling you to invite as many others to join you as you wish with no additional costs. If you purchase the CD-ROM you can use it as often

as you wish.

You may want to share the cost of the hybrid conference within your region. You can even offer it at a different time so that you can have discussions around the topics and information shared by Julie Weatherly, Esq. and Dr. Sprick. There are many ideas and flexible ways to get this important and practical information and resources out to people and to build it into staff development over time. Go to the CASE website <http://www.casecec.org/> for registration and conference information.

Team with people in your district or region! Remember, one price and you can have as many people in your group as you wish and have Julie Weatherly, Esq. and Dr. Sprick provide you with practical information and resources! ●

LEGISLATIVE *update*

The holidays are upon us and that can only mean one thing to those who follow the legislature: the session is just around the corner. The legislature will convene on February 20, 2018, with the session likely running until the constitutionally-mandated end date of May 21 (For those of you who want to know how that is calculated, it's the first Monday after the third Saturday in May of each year. Hope that helps you in your next game of Trivial Pursuit).

2018 is not a funding year and given the slight dip in the state revenue forecast released in early December—a fall of \$188 million in projected revenue—it is unlikely that any additional money will be pumped into special education (or any element of education) this session. There will be discussion of a number of policy-related positions and some of those discussions may surround controversial issues. It is also a bonding year and there is always a long line of prospective projects vying for funding.

Even though it is not a funding year, MASE members should continue to contact legislators and voice their concerns about long-term funding for special education and special education policy. As the new (actually not so new anymore) special education formula continues to be phased in, districts throughout the state are noticing inequities in reimbursement percentages. While the overall spending for special education clearly isn't enough to meet the requirements to educate children with disabilities as witnessed by the ever-growing amount of revenue districts must channel from the general funds to cover non-reimbursed special education costs, the distribution issue is separate, but equally alarming. It has become increasingly difficult for district staff to estimate what level of funding will be coming to them from the state and that often puts district balance sheets in jeopardy.

Legislators need to hear stories of how formulas are not working (or working if that is the case) and as people on the front lines of the issue, MASE members have the expertise and energy to provide them with the background they need to make wise decisions. With the session not starting until late-February, MASE members have an additional month to contact their local legislators prior to session. I urge everyone to contact their legislators—both in the district in which they work and the district in which they live—and provide input on the broad range of issues faced by the special education community. This not only creates

more informed decisions, it also helps MASE members develop an ongoing relationship with legislators and establishing themselves as experts that legislators can rely upon.

Feel free to contact me with any questions you might have as the session nears. I can be reached at lundelllegislative31@gmail.com or (612)-220-7459. I always enjoy hearing from MASE members and will try to answer every question that comes my way. ●



Brad Lundell
MASE Lobbyist

CASE Board Meeting from page 6.

- Preventing bullying and harassment by funding additional research on programs targeted to reduce levels of bullying and harassment in order to know which school based interventions are appropriate.
- Reforming dispute resolution procedures by emphasizing positive aspects of resolving concerns of both parents and schools.
- Supporting development of seclusion and restraint regulations and providing additional funding to assist states in efforts to train all staff.
- Opposing publicly funded subsidies of private education since public education is essential to providing equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students.
- Supporting high quality preparation for all educators, including addressing chronic shortages in special education.
- Addressing disproportionality but allowing greater flexibility with Coordinated Early Intervening Services, including greater flexibility in how districts with disproportionality can use the set aside dollars.

As you can see, the platform is long, but includes issues that impact the work that we do every day in Minnesota. If you would like more information about the issues and recommendations, please let Laura or me know. The work involves all of us across education and it's positive to know that CASE has been active in pulling together so many different partners to support the work we all do for the benefit of students. ●

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.

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.



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

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.

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



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

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. ●

Award and Leadership Nominations Are Open Until January 8, 2018

Each year, MASE provides an opportunity to recognize outstanding members who are dedicated leaders and advocates for children and Minnesota education. We encourage you to consider nominating yourself or a colleague for recognition. Nominate someone who you feel reflects the qualities of a leader who is committed to education and who is an exemplary representative of MASE. Please remember that anyone can nominate for MASE awards. Please feel free to share award nomination information with your staff and community.

All the award applications can be found on the MASE homepage or at www.mnase.org/awards - look in the right hand column.

All nomination materials are due to dchristians@mnasa.org by the end of the day January 8, 2018.

- 2018 MASE Distinguished Service Award
- 2018 Special Education Administrator of the Year Award
- 2018 MASE Legacy Award
- 2018 MASE New Special Education Leader Award

MASE Officer Nomination Process:

MASE officers have the opportunity to influence education in Minnesota and serve their fellow colleagues.

We encourage you to nominate yourself or a colleague who you feel would be a strong leader for MASE. If you nominate a colleague, please contact your nominee and ask them whether or not they are interested in running for the position and so they know you have nominated them!

MASE officers must be:

- Active Members in good standing in MASE.
- Members of CASE while serving their terms of office.

Nominations are open until January 8, 2018 for the MASE offices of: President-Elect and Secretary.

Fill out the online nomination forms at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZCBF8H2>

MASE President-Elect (2018-19)

The President-Elect serves one year, followed by one year as President and one year as Past President.

Duties as President-Elect:

The President-Elect shall serve in the event of resignation or absence of the President. S/he shall serve as Co-chair of the Strategic Planning and Federal Advocacy Committees, appoint a Chair/Co-chair-Elect to each Standing Committee, and have such other responsibilities as necessary in regard to matters as delegated by the President and/or Board of Directors.

The President-Elect travels to Washington, D.C. for CASE summer legislative and CASE fall Board meeting

Duties as President (2019-20):

The President shall preside at the annual business meeting of MASE and at the meetings of the Board of Directors. S/he shall appoint ad hoc committee chairpersons subject to the approval of the officers. This officer shall act for MASE between annual meetings, clearing, by mail, telephone, e-mail or other forms of electronic communication whenever necessary, important actions with the officers. The President, or such alternate as s/he may designate, shall represent MASE at meetings of other groups where MASE representation is desired or required. The President may appoint a parliamentarian to serve at all business meetings of MASE. The President shall serve as a standing member of the Business Partnership Committee.

MASE Secretary (2018-20)

The Secretary serves a two year term.

Duties as Secretary:

The Secretary shall keep accurate minutes of MASE meetings and meetings of the officers. S/he shall carry on correspondence and other responsibilities as necessary in regard to matters as delegated by the President and/or Board of Directors.

Fill out the online nomination forms at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZCBF8H2>

Jill Skarvold Receives National Leadership Award

MASE is proud to announce that Jill Skarvold, Regional Specialist for Special Education at Lakes Country Service Cooperative, has been named the 2018 Outstanding Administrator of Special Education by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE).



Jill Skarvold
Regional Specialist for Special Education
Lakes Country Service

The CASE Outstanding Administrator of Special Education Award was instituted for recognition of individuals making significant professional contributions to leadership behavior and field practice in the administration of programs for students with disabilities and/or who are gifted. Nominees for this award must have had ten (10) years experience in the field of special education and must be a current member of CASE. Ms. Skarvold will receive the award on February 7, 2018 at the CEC Convention in Tampa, Florida.

In the Spring of 2017, Ms. Skarvold was recognized by MASE with its Special Education Administrator of the Year Award for her dedication to students with disabilities and their families, and her active involvement in professional and community affairs. As part of the state award, MASE was pleased to nominate Ms. Skarvold for the national recognition.

Ms. Skarvold has been in the special education field for more than 40 years, and has served as the Regional Specialist for Special Education at Lakes Country Service Cooperative since 2015. She is a dynamic and dedicated educator whose contributions to the field of special education are numerous. Through her leadership and vision, she has built organizations recognized for providing outstanding and innovative specialized services for students with unique needs.

During her career, Ms. Skarvold was a Special Education Coordinator and Administrator for the St. Mary's County Public Schools in Maryland. She also served as an administrator for the Department of Public Instruction and the West River Special Services in North Dakota. She was the Principal and then

Director of Special Services for the Dickinson Public Schools in North Dakota, and then served as the Executive Director of Learner Support Services at Moorhead Area Public Schools from 2001-2015.

As an advocate for students with disabilities, Ms. Skarvold has been an active MASE member serving on the Professional Development, Nominations, Legislative, Strategic Planning, Federal Advocacy, and Stenwick Benson Scholarship Review Committees. She has served as the MASE President and currently serves as the liaison to the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE). Ms. Skarvold has also represented MASE on the Minnesota Department of Education Task Force on Recruitment Issues for Special Education, Mild Disabilities Advisory Committee, State Advisory Committee on Rtl, and the Restrictive Procedures Workgroup. Beyond Minnesota, she also served on the executive boards for the special education administrators associations in Maryland and North Dakota.

Ms. Skarvold earned her master's and specialist degrees in Curriculum & Instruction and Administration from the University of Maryland. She received her bachelor's degree in Elementary and Special Education from the University of North Dakota. ●

2018 MASE Leadership Issues (Formerly "Rural Issues")

January 25, 2018

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!

RETIREE *perspectives*

Striving for a Graceful Retirement

by Barbara Troolin, Education Consultant, Indigo Education and Holt Consulting Group

Merriam-Webster defines retirement as a) an act of retiring or retreating, b) withdrawal from one's position or occupation or from active working life, c) having concluded one's position or career, d) the age which one normally retires. I beg to differ, as it can be so much more positively stated. Let's look at this life transition as an opportunity to revive, renew, repurpose and reinvent!

The new normal is the experience of "retirement" to be as unusual and different as the paths of our individual careers. Some of us started the moments after tossing our high school graduation caps. One of my high school pals went to college a year early. Others took a respite, traveled, worked, served in the military or stayed home, searching for a plan or a job or a break. The adventures to higher education and to our careers were truly unique, as are the transitions from our careers to what is next.

I look around at my friends and colleagues who have "retired." Some just start another position in the same career, perhaps with some flexibility or in a different district. OK, that is ambitious. Others try a different avenue, such as HR (same ballpark, different base) or Technology (broader field, different ballpark) or selling shoes (way different sport). Now that is a change of venue! Another perspective comes from a retiree that declared - "I can't wait to retire so I can get up at 6 in the morning and drive around really slow and make everyone late for work." Rather rebellious yet having fun!

After talking with many retirees, I am concluding that retirement is spectrum-like. It can be just as unique and different as our paths to higher education, the strange journeys we've taken to get positions we've held and the transitions to doing something else. At one end, we have retirees doing much of the same thing, now positioned in a different organizational chart in a different zip code. Hooray for these folks who have energy, skills and experience to share. On another point of the spectrum we have people with tremendous skill sets that clearly change their course. Some are volunteering, some work on a flexible schedule doing their own thing - working at an antique store, finding more time for art, reading,

writing or cooking. Many report more time with family, and cite grandkid time as very special (Ruby is now seven). Those in the middle of these examples have found a niche in something part-time, flexible and related to our field, and often focus on the parts of our work that we liked the best. All of these examples of real life retirement adventures are a custom fit. There are endless ways we can continue to tap our creativity and wisdom and still make a difference. Think of the benefits of mature workers – we are experienced, we have become wiser, we have learned efficiencies, we have learned much from our mistakes yet we continue to grow, learn and serve.

Author Sarah Kaufman writes about moving well through life, whatever your direction may be, to create the art of grace. The dimensions of grace, whether emotional, physical or spiritual, are about being at ease in the world. For those of you who are in some stage of transition or adventurous retirement (and for the rest of you that will be at some point), Kaufman encourages us to celebrate the gifts of life – celebrate love, express gratitude, practice kindness and embrace those challenges and changes.

As we rush through emails, run our wild errands this time of the year, curse the careless drivers, and try to squeeze in one more meeting, this is a reminder of the benefits of living with more grace. A dear friend of mine passed away recently who practiced graciousness everyday. Michelle exemplified the art of kindness and inspired others to do the same. If you look at life as if everyday is a miracle, you can enjoy the gifts of play, work, and everyday living with gratitude and grace. That will make your life, including career transitions, even more rewarding. The best to you in 2018! ●

Dr. Barbara L. Troolin is an education consultant working for Indigo Education and Holt Consulting Group and is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Minnesota.

Special Transportation: Putting the Pedal to the Metal on Three Key Issues

From determining the right vehicle to responding to student behavior, transporting students to and from school poses unique issues for special educators. Transportation can significantly impact the provision of a FAPE to students with disabilities; thus, school districts must ensure that they are complying with state and federal law when assessing the need for and, where applicable, providing special transportation services to their students.

The IDEA regulations provide that transportation may be a related service that must be provided if necessary to enable a student to benefit from special education services. 34 C.F.R. § 300.34(a) and (c)(16). This includes transportation to and from schools, as well as around school buildings. See *id.* The provision of special transportation for a child with a disability may also require specialized equipment such as adapted buses, lifts, and ramps. *Id.* Even if the student does not require transportation to benefit from special education, the school district still must transport disabled students if it provides transportation to non-disabled students. *Letter to Smith*, 23 IDELR 344 (OSEP 1995).

1. IEP Development: Parent and Student Preference

As with other related services, transportation services must be determined by the student's IEP team. See, e.g., *Letter to Anonymous*, 23 IDELR 832 (OSEP 1995). And, as with other components of an IEP, the team must consider parental input. *K.E. ex rel. K.E. v. Indep. Sch. Dist. No. 15*, 647 F.3d 795, 805 (8th Cir. 2011).

If the team determines that the student requires specialized transportation, the IEP team should take care to be specific as to the terms and conditions of the transportation services. Merely including a reference to "special transportation" in the IEP, without greater detail, may lead to disputes as to the scope of services to be provided. See *Davis Sch. Dist.*, 18 IDELR 696 (SEA UT 1992). To prevent such disputes, the IEP should include as much detail as possible as to the need for any adaptive equipment or assistive technology, the extent of services to be provided during transportation, and the reason for such transportation. Likewise, if the team determines that the student requires transportation to have an equal opportunity to participate in non-academic and

extracurricular events, the extent of the student's needs and the transportation services to be provided should be included in the IEP. Goals and objectives may also need to be included in the IEP if the transportation services are provided for some purpose relating to the student's education other than simply enabling the student to get to and from school. See *Letter to Smith*, 23 IDELR 344 (OSEP 1995).

That being said, there are certain areas over which the school district generally exercises greater discretion. For instance, the school district can generally select the bus driver and other personnel who work with disabled students during transportation. See *Gellerman v. Calaveras Unified Sch. Dist.*, 37 IDELR 125 (9th Cir. 2002). If the selection of personnel affects the student's receipt of FAPE in the least restrictive environment, however, the IEP team may be required to make that decision. See, e.g., *Corpus Christi Independent School District*, 57 IDELR 297 (SEA TX 2011).

In general, school districts also have the discretion to select bus stops. There are some exceptions to this rule, however. For instance, the Missouri Department of Education recently determined that a school district's failure to provide door-to-door transportation deprived the student of a FAPE. *Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled*, 67 IDELR 221 (SEA MO 2016). In that case, the department concluded that loading and unloading a wheelchair bound student at a curb located at the bottom of a hill tended to cause vehicles to "backup" and significantly increased the likelihood that an accident would occur.

2. Transportation and the Least Restrictive Environment



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Legal Issues continued on page 14.

RESEARCH TO *practice*

Avoid “Solutionitis” When Trying to Solve Complex Problems

During the 2017 Spring MASA conference, I had the pleasure of participating with Jim Rickabaugh in a keynote address on the topic of personalized learning and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) frameworks. The task was to do a cross-walk between personalized learning and MTSS. The talk was not intended to be a contentious debate about the relative merits of personalized learning versus MTSS, but an opportunity for attendees to better understand how the two frameworks work together (rather than an “either-or”). Overall, it was a wonderful opportunity to have a professional dialogue about innovative ways to improve student outcomes. There were similarities between the two approaches – most notably in the goal of improving outcomes for all learning through matching instruction to student need and building an effective infrastructure to support learning. There were also some differences including assessments, goal-setting, and evaluating the impact of these frameworks.

For the past few years, I have focused less on what we call what we are doing and more on ensuring that we evaluate the impact of what we do and that what we do is specifically matched to the needs that exist in each district and supported by research. Over the past several decades, we have said hello (and sometimes goodbye) to a myriad of philosophies and approaches to improving instruction including RtI, Differentiated Instruction, Project-Based Learning, Flipped Classrooms, Constructivism, MTSS, Personalized Learning, Design Thinking, Outcomes Based Instruction, and Whole Language to name a few. The list could continue for several pages. In his book “Learning to Improve”, Tony Bryk talks about an affliction that is common among educators - Solutionitis. Solutionitis occurs when educational leaders jump quickly on a solution before fully understanding the exact problem to be solved. Popular ideas move very quickly, and each initiative becomes the new “hot” hammer to fix educational problems. Many times, the ideas lack a research base, outcomes are not satisfactory, and we move on to the next hot new idea. Solutionitis is often referred to as siloed reasoning because complex problems are often viewed through a narrow lens. My only hesitation about personalized learning was whether there was adequate research showing the

effectiveness of this framework before bringing it to large scale and that it would become the next “hot” hammer.

As it turns out, the Gates Foundation funded a major study of personalized learning schools that is being conducted RAND Corporation researchers. In a recent Education Week interview², the researchers of personalized learning were interviewed about the most recent findings of the study. They summarized a few big ideas (Marshall, December 2017³):

- The evidence base for personalized learning is very weak at this point. More research is needed to validate this approach. While some schools are seeing positive results, it is too early to generalize the conclusions to other settings.
- Consensus has not been reached on a common definition of personalized learning. While many districts implementing a personalized learning framework are creating individual learning plans and using a mastery approach where students do not move on to new material until they have mastered previous content. In addition, the use of technology is often a common denominator. However, there is great variability in how personalized learning is implemented.
- There are barriers to implementing personalized learning. Time is a very real challenge. Teachers need time to create materials that are matched to student’s instructional levels, and collaboration among colleagues can be challenging with so many personalized lessons.
- The message is not to abandon the implementation of personalized learning frameworks, but rather, to evaluate the impact of the framework on the desired outcomes. Program evaluation information may be used to improve implementation.



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Solutionitis continued on page 17.

The least restrictive environment ("LRE") requirement of the IDEA applies equally to student transportation services. According to the Department of Education, "[i]t is assumed that most children with disabilities will receive the same transportation provided to nondisabled children, consistent with the LRE requirements [of the IDEA] ... unless the IEP Team determines otherwise." 71 Fed. Reg. 46, 576 (2006) (emphasis added). Indeed, "many children with disabilities can receive the same transportation provided to nondisabled children, consistent with the least restrictive environment requirements...." *Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Eligible for Transportation*, 53 IDELR 268 (OSERS 2009).

The LRE requirement may come into play when a student has a history of behavior problems associated with transportation. For example, one federal court determined that a school district failed to comply with the LRE requirement by not allowing a seven-year-old student with Down Syndrome to be transported on the regular bus with a "bus buddy" during second grade, despite evidence of a history of behavioral problems on the special education bus. *B.B. v. Catahoula Parish Sch. Dist.*, 62 IDELR 50 (W.D. La.

2013).

3. Discipline and Special Transportation

A student's school day starts with transportation. Accordingly, behavior plans should be enforced on the bus. Other strategies school districts can employ include using aides on buses, using bus stop monitors, and implementing positive behavioral support programs that include the integration of behavioral strategies on the bus.

It is also important to be aware that, where a student is suspended from the bus and bus transportation is part of the student's IEP, each day of suspension from the bus counts as a day of suspension for purposes of IDEA, unless the school district arranges for alternative transportation. *Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Eligible for Transportation*, 53 IDELR 268 (OSERS 2009). However, if bus transportation is *not* a part of the student's IEP, a bus suspension would not count as a suspension for purposes of IDEA. See *Baltimore County Pub. Schs.*, 115 LRP 25623 (SEA MD 2015); see also 71 Fed. Reg. 46, 715 (2006). ●



SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW & LEADERSHIP

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WELCOME

new members

Joel Anderson, Special Services Supervisor, St. Croix River Education District
Jennifer DuFresne, Special Services Supervisor, St. Croix River Education District
Jennifer Eldred, Special Services Supervisor, St. Croix River Education District
Tina Erickson, Special Education Coordinator, Runestone Area Education District
Robin Francis, Special Education Coordinator, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Schools
Katie Gag, Special Education Coordinator, River Bend Education District
Gail Ghere, Interim Director of Specialized Services, Saint Paul Public Schools
Patrick Gordon, Executive Director, Zumbro Education District
Theresa Gulbransen, Ass't. Director of Special Education, Intermediate School District 917
Meghan Hickey, Special Education Supervisor, Robbinsdale Area Schools
Cheryl Hirst, Director of Special Education, Roseau Community Schools
Erin Hoffman, Ass't. Director of Special Education, SWWC Service Cooperative
Tasha Hoium, Special Education Supervisor, Anoka-Hennepin School District
Amy Homicke, Special Education Supervisor, Anoka-Hennepin School District
Kimberly Isley, Special Education Coordinator, New Prague Area Schools
Amy Jordan, Program Coordinator, Brainerd Public Schools
Joanne Karch, Ass't. Director of Special Services, Hopkins Public Schools
Jill Kenton, Special Education Instructional Coach, N. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District
Kendra Krasin, Assistive Technology Facilitator, South Washington County Schools
Amber Kulig, Ass't. Director of Special Education, Hiawatha Valley Education District
Kandi Larson, Special Services Coordinator, Osseo Area Schools
Nicole Loch, Teacher/Program Coordinator, Mahtomedi Public Schools
Barbara Mackey, Ass't. Director of Special Education, Northern Lights Academy Cooperative
Melissa Martin, Administrative Intern, Intermediate School District 287
Anthony Mayer, Director of Special Education, Spring Lake Park Schools
Erin McKoy, Special Services Supervisor, Shakopee Public Schools
Lisa Mickle, Ass't. Director of Special Education, SWWC Service Cooperative
Anthony Miller, Ass't. Director of Special Education, SWWC Service Cooperative
Scott Moline, Ass't. Director of Special Education, Hiawatha Valley Education District
Ashley Nelson, Program Manager, Moorhead Area Public Schools

New Members continued on page 16.

WELCOME

new members

New Members from page 15.

Cristy Olsen, Director of Special Education, SWWC Service Cooperative

Jo Park, Special Education Supervisor, South Washington County Schools

Jolene Parks, Student, Brainerd Public Schools

Jamie Patrick, Special Services Coordinator, Stewartville Public Schools

Cheryl Patterson, Special Education Coordinator, Eastern Carver County Schools

Brooke Peterson, Ass't. Director of Special Services, Intermediate School District 917

Kari Peterson, Special Education Coordinator, MAWSECO

Samuel Phillips, Special Education Supervisor, Anoka-Hennepin School District

Amy Piotrowski, Special Education Supervisor, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District

Kathryn Ralston, Educational Evaluator, Windom Area Schools

Lynna Reese, Special Education Systems Coordinator, Zumbro Education District

Kaline Sandven, Special Education Coordinator, Spring Lake Park Schools

Jackie Skelly, Director of Special Education, Itasca Area Schools Collaborative

Irina Soboleva, Special Services Coordinator, New Ulm Public Schools

Laura Spanier, Student Services Coordinator, BBE Public Schools

Brian Stanley, Supervisor Special Services, Hopkins Public Schools

Amy Swaney, Dean of Special Education, Intermediate School District 917

Tanya Tacker, Director of Special Education, Rum River Special Education Cooperative

Angela Taylor, Director of Special Education Candidate, Eden Prairie Schools

Malai Turnbull, Special Education Coordinator, Lionsgate Academy

Tiffany Vikdal, Due Process Coordinator, Red Wing Public Schools

Leah Voelker, Special Education Teacher, South Washington County Schools

Shirley Volk, Ass't. Director of Special Education, Lakes International Language Academy

Shylla Webb, Special Education Coordinator, MAWSECO

Katie Wheelock, Special Services Coordinator, Owatonna Schools

Caitlyn Willis, Special Education Supervisor, Anoka-Hennepin School District

Joanna Wuornos, Special Education Supervisor, Anoka-Hennepin School District

Carolyn Zieske, Ass't. Director of Student Support Services, Stillwater Area Public Schools

MASE CALENDAR

2018

January 25

MASE Leadership Issues

10 am-2 pm

Benton-Stearns Education District, Sartell

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 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

November 8-10

CASE Annual Conference

Biloxi, MS

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

Solutionitis from page 13.

- There are myths around the "pitfalls" of personalized learning. One myth is that students receive the bulk of their instruction via technology when in fact, teachers are still instructing students in large and small groups.
- The major recommendation from the RAND research is to wait for current research to be completed and keep the focus on effective instruction. Collaboration is important, and educators should continue working as teams to accomplish the schoolwide vision.

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) wants to help avoid solutionitis! We are here to partner with districts to help evaluate the impact of various initiatives and frameworks on student outcomes and help improve implementation of various programs and frameworks. Feel free to e-mail me at kgibbons@umn.edu if you would like more information! ●

1. Bryk, T. (2015). *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*. Harvard Educational Press: Cambridge, MA.
2. "6 Key Insights: Rand Corp. Researchers Talk Personalized Learning" – Benjamin Herold interviews Laura Hamilton, John Pane, and Elizabeth Steiner in *Education Week*, November 8, 2017 (Vol. 37, #12, p. 10-11), <http://bit.ly/2BDvbwC>
3. Marshall, K. (December 11th, 2017). *Marshall Memo 715*, <http://www.marshallmemo.com>

MASE Legislative Resources

Be sure to watch your email inboxes and check out www.mnase.org/legislative to stay up-to-date on the 2018 Minnesota Legislative Session!

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