

Summer 2022

## Let's Get Real

This year marks the first time during my 15 year career in public education that I have ever truly thought about leaving the field. Up until this point, I wholeheartedly believed I would continue to serve as an educational leader until I retired many, many years down the road. During my time as an administrator, I have watched numerous colleagues fail at retirement and I assumed I would someday follow in their shoes as my sense of commitment to the work was so strong I couldn't picture myself walking away and being "done."

The last two plus years have been challenging in more ways than most outside of the field of education can ever begin to imagine. This year, in particular, has proven to be the most difficult for many educators, including myself. Feelings of anxiety, sorrow, inadequacy, being overwhelmed, and exhaustion seem to be impacting educators in droves, causing many to seek new positions, question their career choice, or walk away from public education altogether. I decided to write my newsletter article about this as I know I am not alone in wrestling with these thoughts and feelings.

For those of you Brené Brown fans out there, at some point over the course of the pandemic, you have likely heard her say these words, "People are not okay right now." I have finally come to accept that her reference to "people" doesn't just

include those around me - my family, friends, neighbors, the people I work with, supervise, and support - she is also talking about me! I am not okay right now either.

***So the question is - how do we begin to recalibrate ourselves as educational leaders?***

The word recalibrate means to change the way you do or think about something. For us, I believe recalibration starts with connecting to our purpose.

You have likely been asked some version of this

*Let's Get Real continued on page 7.*



Jamie Nord  
Executive Director  
St. Croix River Education  
District  
2021-23 MASE President

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## Special thanks to our 2021-22 MASE Business Partners!

The MASE Business Partnership program strengthens the ties between MASE members and their collaborative partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Our goal is to advance the field of special education and improve student outcomes with an emphasis on proven, evidence-based practices.

### **Platinum Business Partner Membership**

Creatively Focused, LLC.  
DotCom Therapy  
eLuma Online Therapy  
Family Achievement Center, Inc. (Related Service Provider)  
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Grand Canyon Education  
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Strategic Staffing Solutions  
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Transition Assessments and Curriculum

### **Gold Business Partner Membership**

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STAR Autism Support, INC  
University of St. Thomas Department of Special Education

I will make this short and sweet. This is my last MASE Newsletter article. I can't say that I will miss writing these, as I am not entirely positive that what I have to share is anything "earthshaking." I have tried to focus on you, the MASE member, and what I hope and wish for you. I have encouraged you to take care of yourself as well as your staff. I have suggested that you look for opportunities to celebrate the great work you do with my favorite being that you should/must make an effort to attend your schools' graduation ceremonies. I have reminded you of the opportunities provided by your MASE membership. I cajoled you to step up to support our members by joining committees and taking on leadership roles. I have been rewarded for those efforts by seeing a new group of young directors taking on tasks such as prepping for principal training, legislative advocacy and most recently formalizing our efforts to encourage and inspire teachers and others to consider becoming a special education administrator.

I am pleased that over the past nine years, MASE has grown its membership, its legislative influence and presence in the state and nationally. Much is yet to be done and it will be done through your continued efforts.

I took a look at my very first MASE Impact article: Winter 2013. I am pleased that what I envisioned as my role within MASE was allowed to come to fruition. I share it with you now as I believe that it was an appropriate leadership model in 2013 and remains so today. Further, I appreciate that you have allowed me to lead in a manner consistent with my personal and professional values. Finally, I am especially pleased that I was allowed to deliver on my goal as identified in the very last sentence.

"First and foremost is the role of the Executive Director. In some organizations, this position comes with an expectation that the Executive Director will lead the organization with a capital "L." Typically, this is a full time position. This individual will propose, formulate and advocate for the organization's position on various topics and provide direction to the organization. In my view, this type of director is less of a servant leader and more of a CEO of the organization. This also does not describe me. It is important for our members to understand that the model espoused by our Board of Directors, and that I embrace, is that of an Executive Director who represents and advocates for the positions taken by our Board of Directors and, indirectly, by you, the members. I appreciate the opportunity to have a voice in thoughtful conversations and determinations regarding our organization's positions on various topics, but I do not drive those decisions. I am, however, one of your most direct contacts to the organization and will carry your thoughts and concerns forward. My personal goal is that at the end of every week, I can say that I did something to support our members, both individually and as an organization."

I wish you all well and I will miss the time we have spent together. I want you to know that serving you as your executive director has been the professional joy of my life. Thank you for providing me with that opportunity. ●



John Klaber  
MASE Executive Director

## MASE IMPACT

Summer 2022

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## 2021-22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## 2022 CASE Annual Fall Conference

November 10-12, 2022

Salt Lake City, UT

[www.casecec.org](http://www.casecec.org)

### New Beginnings

*"And suddenly you know...It's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings."*  
- (Unknown)

**A**s many of you already know, I love a good quote. This quote is definitely relevant to the current phase of my life!

It is with much excitement, and admittedly a bit of anxiety, that I venture into this new role as your MASE Executive Director beginning July 1st.

As our current Executive Director, John Klaber officially steps into "actual" retirement, I want to thank him for the example he has set, the commitment he has demonstrated to MASE, and the path he has set for me to move forward. He has not only been a mentor and someone I have always looked up to, but he has also been a great friend. Thank you, John!

As I retire after 34 years in the educational system (in one form or another), I find myself reflecting on the many exceptional opportunities I have had along the way. My journey from para to being the incoming Executive Director of MASE has been full of opportunities for which I am forever grateful. EACH and EVERY one of my experiences have prepared me for this new role. I can remember every single person who "nudged" me along the way seeing strengths in me that I didn't see in myself.

I am confident that my active involvement with MASE over the years has provided me with the organizational understanding and foundation necessary to take on this role. I am so honored to be selected to build on what is already a great organization!

I have been asked several times what I am looking most forward to as the new Executive Director of MASE. I have spent time reflecting on that question. Really thinking about my "why".



Erin Toninato  
Incoming MASE Executive Director

Here is what I know, without hesitation:

- I am looking forward to giving back to an organization that has been instrumental/ invaluable in my special education leadership development - it is time for me to pay it forward!
- I am looking forward to working for the members and supporting you in ways that YOU find most helpful in your special education leadership journey.
- I am looking forward to building strong relationships and continuing to articulate the importance of our work and the difference it makes in the lives of children and families

Please know that I will always keep the MASE members, and your needs, at the forefront of my actions as you ALL hold the keys to our organizational success. Thank you for the work you do, and I can't wait to continue to do it right alongside you!

Looking forward to the "magic of new beginnings!" ●



## MASE Slice of Collaboration!

Join your MASE colleagues for the "Slice of Collaboration!"



It is the second and fourth Tuesday of most months.

[View the Schedule and past Slice recordings here!](#)

If you have topics, presenters; or suggestions, please contact Erin Toninato at [etoninatomase@gmail.com](mailto:etoninatomase@gmail.com).

Your Slice Committee:

Melissa Schaller; Cherie Johnson; Deanna Gronseth; John Klaber; Kori Ryan; Michelle Bethke-Kelliher; Laura Pingry-Kile; and Sarah Mittelstadt

## Are You Moving in 2022-23?

We will soon be sending out MASE membership renewal and recruitment information for the 2022-2023 membership year and we need your help to track members who may be moving. If you know of anyone who is moving to a new position, retiring, or leaving their current position for any reason, OR if you know of someone who is new to a position, please let us know so we can follow up with appropriate membership information.

This is a critical step in making sure we keep our members' benefits coming their way, and that we keep all of members — new and experienced — engaged in the collegial activities that serve MASE's mission.

If you know of someone moving, or retiring, or new to a position, please notify MASE's membership coordinator Deb Larson ([deb.larson@mnasa.org](mailto:deb.larson@mnasa.org)) or via phone at 651-645-6272

### ***New Mailing Address!***

In case you missed it!

MASE's new mailing address is:

PO Box 9400

North St Paul, MN 55109



### **CEC/CASE Special Education Legislative Summit (SELS)**

July 10-13, 2022

Save the Date!

Washington, DC

### **CEC Convention**

March 1-3, 2023

Save the Date!

Louisville, KY

question over the years, “Why did you decide to pursue a career in education?” For most of us, the answer likely has something to do with kids. But I would challenge you to dig deeper than that. What is your unique purpose?

According to Dr. Cindra Kamphoff, a certified mental performance coach and consultant, “your purpose is your inner guide that helps you choose how to act and think.”

For me, my purpose hasn’t always been clear. Was my purpose simply to carry out the mission of the organization I was leading? Was my purpose supposed to be something more personal, not connected to my professional identity? Insert a global pandemic resulting in an onslaught of new personal and professional responsibilities, challenges, and uncertainties, and my purpose seemed to get even cloudier.

Following is an excerpt from Dr. Kamphoff’s Beyond Grit Workbook that really spoke to me as I was doing my own soul searching this school year:

When things get tough, the world’s best don’t focus on their worries and frustrations, their hardships and setbacks. They keep their minds fixed on the one thing that matters: their purpose.

Your purpose is unique to you. It’s not simply your job description - executive, athlete, partner, spouse, friend. It’s the thing that ignites your desire and passion, the objective that makes you come alive when you’re working toward its fulfillment. No one else has the same mix of experiences, knowledge, values, gifts, and dreams as you. No one else can offer the world exactly what you can.

Knowing your purpose is key to remaining gritty. Without it, you can get off track, burn out, and forget why you’re doing what you’re doing in the first place. Your purpose gives you a spark when you want to give up, and reminds you of why you must stay persistent no matter the setback. So ask yourself: What am I fighting for? What makes me want to get up every morning? What lights a fire in my belly?

With the support of Dr. Kamphoff and my team, I was able to nail down my purpose this year - to see the unseen potential in people and systems; to nurture others in realizing that potential and to strategically improve the health of systems for the benefit of all. While these words may not carry much weight for you, they are so powerful to me. The first time I read them outloud, I remember thinking, “Oh my goodness, this is me!” while my team simultaneously cheered on the Zoom screen as they recognized it was me too.

Once you get clear on your purpose, you may be wondering what’s next. It’s about living it out, connecting to your purpose every day. Maybe for you it is writing it out on a post-it on the dash of your car or on your bathroom mirror so you read it multiple times per day. For me, each morning I think about what I have on my schedule for the day and visualize the people and systems I will impact by living out my purpose and the ripple effects it will make. This daily step of intentionally connecting to my purpose has slowly begun to shift the way I show up and think about my work. My spark has been relit!

My recalibration is definitely a work in progress; however, I already feel empowered to live more purposefully. I hope you will consider whether you are in need of recalibration this summer.

**M**y summer newsletter update usually revolves around what happened at the Legislature during the past session, whether good, bad, or ugly. That won't be happening this year—or at least not yet—as the Legislature adjourned without passing much in the way of major legislation and nothing in the area of E-12 education.

That comes as a bit of a surprise given how the performance of the Minnesota economy has produced a massive projected budget surplus. There was hope that the Legislature and Governor would agree on a budget and tax relief framework that would generate enough legislative support to pass and be signed into law. For a variety of reasons, that turned out to not be the case, and the Legislature adjourned without tackling a number of significant issues.

As I write this, negotiations on reaching an agreement continue in hopes that all parties can agree on legislation that could be passed during a short special session. It remains to be seen if that can be accomplished.

MASE was very visible during the legislative session. I can remember when retired Robbinsdale Special Education Director and then-MASE President Daryl Miller laid out a very simple legislative goal for the organization: Whenever legislation that even marginally affects special education is discussed, decision-makers should ask, "What does MASE think?"

There are still times when an issue or bill sneaks by that filter, but for the most part, MASE has become a key player in education discussions and is routinely asked for its input. That is a credit to MASE members for stepping up and letting legislators know the effects—good or bad—that

proposals will have on special education.

What was most disheartening in the Legislature's failure to come to an agreement is that the final omnibus education bill would have likely contained a major commitment to reducing the special education cross-subsidy both in the immediate and extended future.



Brad Lundell  
MASE Lobbyist

One of the session's highlights was MASE's active involvement in a Day of Advocacy held by a wide range of education advocacy groups. A quote from current MASE President Jamie Nord was featured in the press release that was delivered to the statewide media. The Day of Advocacy clearly made a mark in the waning days of the legislative session. As the education conference committee worked to craft a final bill, cross-subsidy relief was being seriously discussed and would have likely been—and still might be—the central feature of the bill. We will have to wait and see on that.

There were other issues contained in the Senate and House bills that have an effect on special education.

The Senate bill invested heavily in the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) and the House also funded literacy initiatives, though not to the Senate's level of funding.

The House bill also contained investments in

*Legislative continued on page 9.*



Would it be beneficial for you to get clear on your purpose from wherever you are planning to rest, renew, and restore for the upcoming school year, whether that's at the end of the dock, out on the lake, or under a tree? If the answer is yes and you would like some resources to get started, check out the links below.

[TEDx Video: How to Unlock the Power of Purpose with Richard Leider](#)

[High Performance Mindset Podcast: The Power of Purpose with Richard Leider \(Episode 333\)](#)

[Book: Beyond Grit: 10 Powerful Practices to Gain The High-Performance Edge by Dr. Cindra Kamphoff](#)

[Workbook: Beyond Grit Workbook by Dr. Cindra Kamphoff](#) ●

## Save the Date! 2023 MASA/MASE Spring Conference

March 9-10, 2023  
Minneapolis Marriott Northwest  
Brooklyn Park, MN



## SAVE THE DATE! 2022 MASE Fall Leadership Conference

October 26-28, 2022  
Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd, MN

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). There were two provisions in the House bill with which MASE had concerns. One would have required prep time for special education teachers to complete due process paperwork and the other would have extended the eligibility age for students in transition programs. Neither of these provisions appeared to be in the position to gain approval as the session wound down, and I doubt they would resurface if a special session were called.

One of the real disappointments of the session is that the tax bill did not pass either. A provision in the final tax bill would make rural cooperative units eligible for Long Term Facilities Maintenance Revenue and that provision will likely continue to survive if a final agreement is reached and a special session is called. It is incredibly disappointing that this provision has come so close to passage several times over the last few years, and it is disheartening to see it fall by the wayside again.

Lastly, the Data Practices Bill that would have given parents the right to opt-out of online special education due process paperwork was amended to prevent that from happening.

MASA Lobbyist Valerie Dosland worked tirelessly on the Data Practices Bill and deserves many thanks for her efforts.

I want to thank MASE membership for its efforts this year. Our periodic legislative ZOOM calls were beneficial for me, and I hope they were informative for MASE membership. As always, you can reach me at 612-220-7459 or [lundelllegislative31@gmail.com](mailto:lundelllegislative31@gmail.com). ●

# MASE

## *retirements*

### Congratulations to our 2022 MASE Retirees

#### **MASE Members**

Kelly Tetrick, Director of Special Services, South St. Paul Public Schools

Erin Toninato, Director—Region 9, South Central Service Cooperative

#### **MASA and MASE Joint Members**

Shannon Erickson, Director of Special Education, Fergus Falls Area Special Ed. Cooperative

Eugene Harthan, Superintendent, Swanville Public Schools

Laine Larson, Superintendent, Brainerd Public Schools

Sandra Lewandowski, Superintendent, Intermediate School District 287

**Thank you for your service to special education students and families in Minnesota!**

# MASE

## *election results*

### President-Elect

#### **Melissa Hanson**

Executive Director  
Meeker & Wright Special  
Education Cooperative  
mhanson@mawseco.k12.  
mn.us



### MASE Secretary

#### **Michelle Cuka**

Supervisor of Specialized  
Education Services  
Eastern Carver County  
Schools  
cukam@isd112.org



Thank you to the candidates who were nominated and ran to serve as President-Elect and Secretary of MASE. We had a wonderful turnout of our voting members!

MASE President-Elect: Melissa Hanson, Executive Director, Meeker & Wright Special Education Cooperative (MAWSECO)

MASE Secretary: Michelle Cuka, Special Education Supervisor, Eastern Carver County Schools

Congratulations to our newly elected officials!



The Stenswick Benson Scholarship Award Program began in February of 1991. 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. We started with \$4500 in 1991 and this year (2022) our endowment is over \$290,000.00.

#### MASE Stenswick Benson Scholarship Recipients Announced

**Adrienne Blazevic**

St. Croix River Education District  
St. Cloud State University, Director License

**Katie Challberg**

New Prague  
Minnesota State University, Moorhead, Director License

**Katie Marciniak**

Hermantown  
Hamline University, Director License

**Heather Schutte**

Byron  
University of Minnesota, Director License

**Neil Smith**

Cannon Valley Special Education Coop  
Minnesota State University, Mankato, Director License

**Emily Virant**

Robbinsdale  
Hamline University, Director License

**Beth Vos**

Osseo  
St. Cloud State University, Director License

**Holly Ward**

Thief River Falls  
Minnesota State University, Moorhead, Director License, P/HD License

Thank you to the Scholarship Committee members for their thoughtful work in reviewing the applications and selecting the recipients!

# MASE CALENDAR

## **2022**

**June 23-24**

**MASE and MASA Board Retreats**

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

**June 30**

**CASE Annual Report Due**

**July 1**

**MASE Membership Renewal**

**October 26**

**MASE Board Meeting**

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

**October 26-28**

**MASE Fall Leadership Conference**

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

**November 8**

**CASE Executive Committee Meeting**

Marriott, Salt Lake City, UT

**November 9-10**

**CASE Board Meeting**

Marriott, Salt Lake City, UT

**November 10-12**

**CASE Fall Conference**

Marriott, Salt Lake City, UT

## **2023**

**February 8-10**

**CASE Winter Workshop**

Virtual

**March 1-3**

**CEC Convention**

Louisville, KY

**March 8**

**MASE New Leaders Cohort**

**MASE Board of Directors Meeting**

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

**March 9-10**

**MASA/MASE Spring Conference**

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

## **2022-23 MDE Meeting Dates**

### **Directors' Forum**

August 12, 2022

September 9, 2022

October 14, 2022

November 18, 2022

December 9, 2022

January – None

February 17, 2023

March 17, 2023

April 14, 2023

May 12, 2023

June 9, 2023

### **SEAP**

September 13, 2022 – Orientation

September 23, 2022

November 4, 2022

January 20, 2023

April 21, 2023

June 16, 2023