

Tis' the Season ... To Build Resiliency

What a wonderful time of the year! (Isn't there a song or movie that touts this as such?) This is a season that starts at Thanksgiving and continues on through the new year, and it requires a fair amount of stamina. Many of our students, families, staff, and even we experience this time of year as both celebratory and stressful. The holidays are a time to connect with family and friends; however, they are also a reminder of loved ones lost, distance, and the loss of resources to support connection and celebration. As we move through the upcoming months, we, as leaders, have an opportunity to proactively look for ways to support those in our school communities not only through this time of year but throughout the whole year.

This year, the MASE Fall Conference provided a wealth of resources and expertise focused on building the capacity of attendees in the area of social emotional learning and strengthening the resiliency of the staff supporting students and families. In preparation for the upcoming season of hard decisions and changes that are predictable in our jobs, it is critical that we as leaders nurture our own emotional resilience and the resilience of others. Research states that 50% of our emotional resilience is due to genetics, 10% to the circumstance itself, and a whopping 40% is a result of our own daily habits and behaviors. That being said, what we do each day significantly impacts our ability to succeed despite

adversity and overcome challenges in a way that is productive and forward moving.

Emotional resilience is about taking care of yourself so you have something to give to others when the need arises. It is how much spring we have in our step AFTER experiencing something challenging. As leaders, in order to support and connect with our staff, we must be aware and intentional about how we support our own resilience. It is important to care for our physical, emotional, and mental well-being and personally reflect on events in the school year, while we simultaneously practice mindfulness in the current moment.

As issues and concerns arise, it is easy to focus on situations beyond our sphere of control and engage in "rut" behavior. These are behaviors that are dull, stagnant, and unproductive. To increase our emotional resilience, we must continually strive for "river" behaviors - behaviors or attitudes that are constantly moving forward and provide personal growth, transformation, and life. Emotional resilience will provide us with the ability and strength to move the conversation forward—to not focus on the negative, but have inner resilient strength to find solutions within our sphere of control. Emotional resilience is a powerful tool for meeting the challenging demands and expectations of school administration.

Every school year has somewhat of a predictable cycle that we as leaders anticipate and talk about. With some intentionality in our planning we can support and enhance the emotional resiliency of ourselves, our staff, and as a result our students. The "12 Months of Resiliency" is a resource that can be shared with staff



Mary Clarkson
MASE President
Executive Director of Special
Programs
Richfield Public Schools

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Special thanks to our 2016-17 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.

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Special & Gifted Education
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"It's Not What You Know, But Who You Know"

Congratulations! You've made it through the fall and child count is almost a thing of the past. We are also approaching the end of the calendar year, so please allow me the opportunity to reflect a bit on various themes.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the old adage, "It's not what you know, but who you know," is more than a truism, especially in a time when every fact that you really need to know can be found somewhere on the Internet. It's the relationships with others that will dictate personal and professional success. I want to reinforce the value of your relationship to MASE and its members. You will find that you have friends in high places who will always make themselves available to support, enlighten, commiserate and maybe even share a beverage with you. It is also an approach that I try to apply to my work on your behalf. The personal relationships with our friends at MDE, MASA, and MREA to cite just a few, have benefited our members and I like to believe the other organizations do as well. Please keep in mind that it is a two-way street. Just as we will continue to work to make sure that there is someone out there to support you, we encourage you to be that same support for another MASE member or the organization as a whole.

Our fall conference was marked by one of the strongest turnouts on record. The topic of social emotional learning was more than timely. It put us clearly in the forefront of the trend of recognizing that social/emotional skills are something that needs to be taught rather than just expected of our students. Thank you to our conference organizers, presenters, business partners (also the largest turnout on record), and to all of the attendees, including those from MDE who demonstrated the value placed on a relationship with MASE.

I recently read an article that discussed the hiring of new employees in the private workforce. There was the now typical reference to the challenge of finding appropriately trained and licensed candidates. But more importantly, the author talked about the relational skills, specifically the ability to work effectively in a group or a team, as being the most predictive of success for the job candidate and the company. I might have added that keeping, motivating and otherwise demonstrating your appreciation for your current staff may be equally or more important. Unfortunately there are times that all of that takes a backseat to the glaring staff opening that you've had since last May. In public education it is sometimes challenging to the system to employ the best person rather than the person possessing a particular license. It would appear that there is support for the

value of "fit" and collegiality when it comes to hiring. I want to congratulate those of you out there who have been willing to look beyond the license to find that right person for the job.

The special education teacher preparation system in Minnesota (and possibly elsewhere in the country) is in disarray. It is not limited to the disappearance of low incidence licensure programs.

You no longer find colleges and universities offering undergraduate teacher licensure programs in LD, DCD, ASD or E/BD. Instead it is all about the ABS license. It might be suggested that the unprecedented requirement for graduate studies in order to keep a teacher license beyond the initial five years is driving this decision. Certainly, it appears that the institutions of higher learning have created a pool of candidates who will be forced into expensive graduate level courses, just to keep their jobs. Additionally, the pool of new teacher candidates licensed to teach in the typical federal setting three and four programs has disappeared. Very recently, I had the opportunity to visit with a college professor who prepares undergraduate special education teacher candidates. She decried the five year limit associated with the ABS license. At the same time, she shared what might be an even greater challenge. University deans and presidents have increased course enrollment thresholds making the offering of discrete licensure courses untenable. So instead of offering a course for those seeking an LD license and a course for those seeking a DCD license, we have a combined course for all the students seeking the ABS license. We should recognize that many colleges and universities, especially those we rely upon for their teacher preparation programs, have experienced freezes and declines in their state funding. Maybe it is time to recognize that the answer is not to place additional financial burdens on young teachers. Maybe the answer is just as we do not license regular elementary education teachers to teach a discrete grade, we should license special education teachers as a generic cross-categorical license for all but low incidence disabilities. This approach, common in many states, addresses the need to find qualified teachers to serve students with disabilities, regardless of the federal setting.

I have a favor to ask that is based on a recent email that



John Klaber
MASE Executive Director

Executive Notes continued on page 11.

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John Klaber

Tis' the Season from page 1.

and used to build awareness of what impacts our ability to be resilient throughout the year. As leaders we can acknowledge and frame (or reframe) experiences for staff to encourage their ability to be emotionally resilient.

It's important to remember that the resilience in our "fuel tanks" varies from day to day and taking a measure of this is important in identifying what you may need to do to increase the presence of resilience in your life. Remember—40% of this depends on your daily habits and activities.

Take time to fill your resilience (fuel) tank.

Tis' the Season continued on page 6.



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- General emails
- Quarterly newsletter
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Please contact us at members@mnasa.org.

Save the Date!

2017 MASA/MASE Spring Conference

Thursday-Friday
March 9-10, 2017

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest,
Brooklyn Park, MN

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

SAVE THE DATE!

Booth Law Group 2017 Regional Special Education Law Conference



SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW & LEADERSHIP

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2017 Conference Announcement!

We are delighted to announce that Dr. Amy June Rowley will be speaking at this year's conference! Dr. Rowley's parents brought the first case to the United States Supreme Court, Rowley v. Bd. of Education, that established the standard for providing a free appropriate public education to students with special needs. Her work and her presentation are especially timely because the Supreme Court will re-examine the Rowley standard this year for the first time in over thirty years.



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12 Months of Resiliency: A Resource for School Administration

June - Understand Emotion

- Graduations, Good-byes, Retirement
- End of year tasks

July - Know Yourself

- Lull in the work year
- Most staff and students are gone
- Time for vacations

August - Build Community

- Leaders are working to build a common bond between the schools, staff, and community
- Building excitement around what is happening and what is to come

September - Cultivate Compassion

- New school year, new expectations, new students
- Lots of new learning

October - Take Care of Yourself

- Beginning of year demand peek, have been running at full speed
- New staff may be feeling overwhelmed

November - Be Here Now

- Get caught up – off of MEA, middle space, running, running, and running
- Many times feel super overwhelmed

This is about mindfulness. The intentional cultivation of moment by moment no-judgmental focused attention

December - Focus on Bright Spots

- Lots of activity in work and personal life - heart of the holiday season
- Identify what is working in your work and life experience

January - Tell Empowering Stories

- Mid-year slump. This is a time where we can feel in a “rut”. We can tell “rut” stories about our work that keeps people stuck OR river stories that promote possibilities and growth

February - Use Energy Where It Counts

- Budget season, staffing, planning for the next year, assessment season - LOTS of work
- Time to conserve energy and focus on your spheres of influence and control

March - Be a Learner

- Conversations about what will be changing for the next year. Potential new work or initiatives
- Be curious. Encourage being a learner and be purposeful about what you can do to engage in learning discussions

April - Play and Create

- It's spring--it is time to begin thinking fresh and new...
- This is the time of year where you plan staff celebration - Promote FUN

May - Appreciate and Celebrate

- Making a point to celebrate the work that has taken place. Tell your colleagues, students, families what you appreciate about them
- Promote positivity ●

LEGISLATIVE *update*

The election is over, the votes are counted, and the landscape at the Minnesota Legislature changed dramatically. The Republicans had a net gain of six seats in the State Senate and now have a 34-33 majority in that body. The Republicans also increased their majority over the DFLers in the House of Representatives from 72-62 to 76-57 (with one vacancy to be filled in a February special election). Combined with the change in administrations at the national level, there's no denying that things will be different across a broad range of public policy.

The House chairs for education funding and policy remain the same, with Representative Sondra Erickson returning to her post as Chair of the House Education Reform Policy Committee and Representative Jenifer Loon maintaining her position as Chair of the House Education Funding Committee. With the change of leadership in the Senate, there will be two new chairs. The new majority has decided to return to having two committees—one dealing with policy and the other with funding—instead of having all education issues go through a single chair. The chairs of the committees under the new format will be Senator Carla Nelson in Education Finance and Senator Eric Pratt in Education Policy.

What does this mean for special education? It's really anyone's guess at this point. At the state level, the special education cross-subsidy continues to prove problematic to school districts throughout the state, paperwork continues to mount for special education teachers, and the shortage of special education teachers is astounding. MASE's legislative platform calls for improvement in all of these areas and it should prove to be a useful document in promoting policies that will make life better for both students who receive special education services and the staff that provides services to these students.

One of MASE's biggest legislative pushes this year will be to change the renewal requirements for the Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS) license. Currently, the ABS license is good for five years with those who hold the license required to earn graduate credits in one of four disability categories—Autism Spectrum Disorder, Specific Learning Disability, Developmental Cognitive Disability, and Emotional Behavioral Disorder—to retain the license. This is the only license issued by the Board of Teaching that requires this level of academic work to continue teaching under the license. With the overwhelming shortage of special education staff, the ABS license was viewed as a way to get more teachers with a broad range of expertise into a variety

of classroom settings. School districts need this flexibility to address the special education teacher shortage they are currently experiencing. MASE will be introducing legislation to make the ABS a permanent license that does not require recipients to do post-graduate work to retain the license.

There will be some things to watch out for in the year ahead.

With all of the talk about more school choice and vouchers at the Federal level, the bill that was heard last biennium that would allow parents of special education students to place their children in private schools and have the state special education appropriation attributable to their child follow to the private educational setting will likely re-surface.

It's important for MASE members to be active in the year ahead. There will likely be a lot of discussion surrounding special education and it is an area where legislators need input. Always remember that you are an expert in the field and what you provide to legislators gets down to the nitty-gritty of service delivery. What is often lost in most any legislative discussion is how lofty well-intentioned proposals often complicate things at the local level. It is extremely important the legislators understand what their ideas mean for those who will be implementing the policy. MASE members can provide that needed insight.

I look forward to working for MASE again in the coming session. I hope to be providing weekly updates throughout the session and look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached at 612-220-7459 or at my e-mail lundelllegislative31@gmail.com. ●



Brad Lundell
MASE Lobbyist

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One year ago this month, on December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This legislation reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

In short, the ESSA provides supports for schools with groups of historically underserved students who consistently demonstrate low performance. In addition, it provides support to certain high schools across the country where at least one third of the students do not graduate on an annual basis.

While the ESSA maintains a role for the federal government in education, it emphasizes that the role is to support and strengthen, not dictate and prescribe to schools. Some have argued this returns the pendulum of federal overreach and prescription back to state and local control.

Some specific changes found in the ESSA include the elimination of the highly qualified teacher provisions found under NCLB. The ESSA does not set a minimum bar for teacher licensure. Another significant change found in the ESSA is the introduction of School Discipline Reform. Specifically, under the ESSA, states must disaggregate and report by student subgroups data pertaining to suspensions and expulsions of students along with tracking the success of subsequent new discipline practices.

While the ESSA reduces many of the reporting requirements of NCLB, it still mandates reporting on student achievement and graduation rates. However, as opposed to NCLB, states and local school districts are empowered to determine the interventions to be implemented and the supports needed. This returns significant control over educational outcomes to the states rather than the federal government.

In order to implement the newly revised law, all states are engaging a process that will establish the required standards for each state in line with the expectations of the ESSA. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is presently convening a series of regional stakeholder meetings to solicit input for the state plan. All states must submit a new state plan to the U.S. Department of Education for the 2017-18 school year.

At the same time as Minnesota develops its ESSA plan, the U.S. Department of Education is simultaneously promulgating regulations that will guide the implementation of the ESSA. This is a process very similar to the one used each time the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is reauthorized and is followed by new federal regulations.

In theory, regulations should simply give guidance to help implement state and federal law. However, it is often the case, especially at the federal level, that the regulations go so far as to change the meaning, spirit, and intent of the law.

There is already concern noted with the draft ESSA rules. Noelle Ellerson Ng is an educational lobbyist and advocate for the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). AASA serves school superintendents much like CASE does special education directors. Noelle noted some specific concerns with the preliminary actions being taken by the U.S. Department of Education (USED). Specifically, she noted that AASA is:

- Opposed to USED's effort to achieve statutory changes to the comparability provision through regulations for "supplement not supplant (SNS)."
- Opposed to USED's regulation (200.18) that requires the state plan to include one summative rating from at least three distinct rating categories for each school.
- Opposed to the proposed regulation that would require all state education agencies (SEAs) to identify LEAs in need of support and/or improvement for the start of the 2017-18 school year (SY).
- Opposed to USED's proposed regulation as it relates to the transportation of foster children.

To learn more about the AASA Legislative agenda or its review of ESSA, please visit: www.aasa.org.



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

Save the Date!

MASE Best Practices

May 10-12, 2017

Madden's Resort, Brainerd

*Please note the date change
from prior communications!*

FALL CONFERENCE

thank-yous



Thanks to everyone who made our 2016 MASE Fall Leadership Conference a great success! We had three wonderful days of learning, networking, and fun. Congratulations to Area D, winners of the coveted Wine Tasting Trophy!

Congratulations to Karen Filla, Director of Student Services, Roseville Area Schools, who received the 2016 MASE Legacy Award!

Thanks to all who participated in the fundraising events — because of your participation, we raised \$7,375 for MNSELF, the Minnesota Special Education Leaders Foundation. MNSELF is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization created to raise funds to sponsor leadership training for current and aspiring directors of special education.



Special thank you to our 2016 Fall Leadership Conference Exhibitors!

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Winsor Learning, Inc

Award and Leadership Nominations Are Open Until January 9, 2017

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.

Award information, including nomination forms and past recipients, can be found at www.mnase.org/awards. Please remember that anyone can nominate for MASE awards. **Nominations must be returned to dchristians@mnasa.org by January 9, 2017.**

Nominations are open for the following awards:

- 2017 MASE Distinguished Service Award
- 2017 Special Education Administrator of the Year Award
- 2017 MASE Legacy Award
- 2017 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 must be returned to dchristians@mnasa.org by January 9, 2017 for the MASE offices of: **President-Elect** and **Treasurer**. The nomination forms are posted online at: www.mnase.org/board.

MASE President-Elect 2017-18

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

Duties:

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 shall preside at the annual business meeting of MASE and at the meeting 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 Past President shall serve as Co-chair of the Legislative Committee and have such other responsibilities as necessary in regard to matters delegated by the President and/or Board of Directors.

In the year following past-presidency, s/he serves as MASE Nominating Committee Chair.

MASE Treasurer 2017-19

The Secretary serves a two-year term.

Duties:

The Treasurer shall oversee the receipt and disbursement, upon proper authorization, all funds of MASE. S/he shall keep an accurate record of receipts and expenditures, and present a report at each annual meeting. The Treasurer shall draw up a proposed budget for the forthcoming year and submit it at the annual business meeting. S/he shall carry on financial and other responsibilities as necessary in regard to matters as delegated by the President and/or Board of Directors.

Your Leadership Partner - CASE

Partnerships are essential in our work! For many years, the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) has been a very close partner in my work at improving the outcomes of students with disabilities. CASE does this by providing leadership and support to members and by influencing policies and practices to improve the quality of education. I've been a member of CASE, a division of Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), since I became an administrator almost 30 years ago -- it's been a valued partner throughout all those years.



Jill Skarvold
CASE Liaison, MASE

As the MASE liaison to CASE, I participate in the CASE board meetings several times a year in order to represent Minnesota's voice in our work dedicated to improving the quality of education for students. Just like MASE in Minnesota, CASE works to be the voice for special education at the national level and to support special education leaders. This fall at the CASE Board Meeting, input was gathered regarding areas that will be part of IDEA reauthorization, such as ways to streamline procedural safeguards and compliance requirements as well as ways to provide maintenance of effort flexibility. CASE has pulled together a work group that has broad representation across many educational groups in order to make recommendations.

In addition, CASE is a leader in professional development with many resources and conferences, including a hybrid (virtual and onsite) conference in February regarding mental health and trauma as well as related legal issues. Take a look at this very well-respected hybrid conference. Another support from CASE for administrators is the discounts on a number of products that CASE has endorsed. Check out the long list of familiar products for which you can get discounts as a CASE member for your district. Click on the CASE website at www.casecec.org to remind you of all the resources available.

If you aren't already a member of CASE, please think about joining. Beginning in June, 2017, you will be able to join CASE at the same time you do your membership for MASE so that you can join your professional organizations at one time. I can't do my work alone. Rather, the CASE opportunities and various resources are a valuable partner in the work I do.

Leadership -- it's what CASE and MASE provide for us at our district, state and national levels. It's clear that just like MASE, CASE is a professional partner for all special education administrators. ●

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Executive Notes from 3.

I responded to regarding the possible closure of one of the few ECSE teacher training programs in Minnesota. As an alumnus, please contact your alma mater encouraging them to maintain special education teacher licensure programs. You might also ask them where the undergraduate LD, DCD, E/D and ASD programs have gone. In fact, share that request with your staff, asking them to do the same. Not being business or technology graduates, it is not likely that we are able to endow a chair or fund the construction of a building. Certainly, you have received any number of phone calls within the past few weeks from your various alma maters. You might be able to donate and make an important point by designating the funds to the special education teacher/school psychology/speech & language pathology programs. What we can do through our collective voices is share the value of special education teacher training programs to the students of Minnesota and to those who chose to make a career of serving those students.

I would be remiss not to mention that we are preparing legislation and our positions on possible legislation that will be coming through the next session. We continue to work across party lines and with our other allies to try to make sure that our mandate to serve students with disabilities can be done in a manner that is effective, efficient and engaging. Our platform is ready for distribution and you should have it by the time you read this message. Please make the effort to visit with your local legislators.

I wish you well during the upcoming winter months and hope to see many of you at regional director meetings. ●

RETIREE *perspectives*

How Can We Support You?

Retirement is great, is it not? There is finally time to explore interests and find new passions. There are grandchildren, which I am told, redefines joy in life. I so look forward to that part!

As directors of special education and special education coordinators we were perpetually solving problems and responding to a myriad of challenges. Retirement provides respite from the rapid-fire demands we all experienced. Some of my colleagues have missed these challenges enough that they have returned to the field accepting other positions. Others of us find ways to use our skills in other creative ways that foster our vital involvement within our communities.

Last year I had the extraordinary experience of mentoring my son as a first year special education teacher. I volunteered in his classroom one afternoon every other week, reconnecting with children with disabilities and spending time with my son. We soon developed a tradition of heading to a local restaurant at the end of each day and discussing ideas for his classroom over dinner. I was able to give my son suggestions of things he may not have considered. Occasionally, due process questions came up and those could be readily addressed in a non-threatening manner.

Though I am sure that I had made efforts to provide support to new special education teachers, as a director of special education, the administrative team and I were pretty busy with the many demands of the job. Seeing what a first year special education teacher faces from their perspective made me aware that my efforts were not sufficient. Certainly our collective efforts are not effective enough to reverse the tide of young special educators leaving the field.

The time spent with my son made me wonder what might be possible in mentoring young special education teachers. Might there be a way to systematize support for special education teachers first starting out?

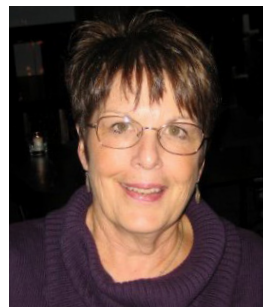
The logistics of providing such support seem so overwhelming and I think to myself, "Just let it go," but I find myself circling around again, committed to the importance of getting and keeping quality special educators. I begin to wonder, "What might be possible?"

When Claudine Knoblauch asked me to write an article for the newsletter, I thought it might be timely to lay the questions out for my retired colleagues.

- Is systematized support for new special education

teachers possible?

- What would such a program look like?
- Would it be possible to gain input from the new special education teachers regarding their needs?
- Are there others interested in this problem?



Susan Butler

Retired Director of Special Education
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

I would love to see a group of folks to study mentoring of new special education teachers in an effort to retain new special educators in the field. As past special education administrators we are uniquely situated to provide knowledge, encouragement and support. This support is not intended as a criticism of training programs. It is proposed as additional support to teachers faced with those simultaneous challenges that can threaten to overwhelm them even as we may have been overwhelmed on any given day.

I am intrigued by the possibilities of this challenge and believe that this is a profound way to maintain the vital involvement in ways that could have a large impact in the field. So my question is: What might we do? What is the correct format to address such a challenge? ●

Save the Date!

MASE Day at the Capitol

Thursday, March 2, 2017

Meeting Begins at 8 am

*Best Western Capitol Ridge, St. Paul
Sibley Room*

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

All MASE members are welcome to attend!

If you need lodging, call the Best Western Capitol Ridge at 651-227-8711 to request the MASE block.

Mind Your PWNs: The Benefits of a Strong Prior Written Notice

The importance of drafting accurate and complete Prior Written Notices must not be overlooked. When drafted correctly, a Prior Written Notice ("PWN") can provide school districts with powerful evidence of its procedural compliance and the team's rationale in making educational decisions. A poorly drafted notice, on the other hand, can signal an ineffective or inappropriately developed special education program, demonstrate lack of effective communication with the student's parents, and/or expose the school district to legal liability.

The first and most basic step to a strong PWN is to ensure compliance with all technical legal requirements. This includes sending a PWN whenever the district is required to do so and including all of the information required by law. Specifically, a PWN must be sent to parents any time a district acts to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a child or the provision of free appropriate public education ("FAPE") to the child or refuses to do the same. 34 CFR §300.503(a). A PWN is required to include the following seven elements:

- A description of the action proposed or refused by the district.
- An explanation of why the district proposes or refuses to take the action.
- A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the district used as a basis for the proposed or refused action.
- A statement that the parents have protection under the rule's procedural safeguards, and, if the notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by

which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained.

- Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions.
- A description of other options that the IEP team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected.
- A description of other factors relevant to the district's proposal or refusal.

34 CFR §300.503(b). The PWN must be written in understandable language, including translation into the parents' native language if necessary. 34 CFR §300.503(c).

Ensuring these baseline requirements are included in each PWN is the first line of defense in protecting the district from avoidable claims that procedural requirements set forth by the rules were not followed. Conversely, failing to meet these requirements is a violation of the IDEA.

In addition to satisfying procedural requirements, paying careful attention to the information that goes into a PWN may insulate the district against other claims. For instance, school districts are more likely to face a claim when an IEP team denies a request that is particularly important to the parent. In those types of situations, a specific PWN that explains the legitimate rationale for denying the request provides evidence that the team fully considered the request and that the parent understood the content of the meeting.

The same is true in situations where the team makes an appropriate proposal—such as proposing a more restrictive placement—with which the parent disagreed during the meeting. In those types of cases, a detailed



Erin E. Benson
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Attorney
Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, P.A.

Are You Moving?

Now is the time of year when many of our members are on the move! Help us keep track of you (and keep your MASE benefits and services coming to you). Please give Deb a call at (651) 645-6272 or (866) 444-5251 or email members@mnasa.org. Deb will update your records. If you have new colleagues in your area who are not MASE members, please let us know and we will send membership information to them.

Mind Your PWNs continued on page 16.

Strong Business Partnerships Help to Enhance the Work of MASE

The MASE Business Partnerships initiative began three years ago and was developed as a means to strengthen the ties between MASE members and their collaborative partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Now considered an institutional part of our practice, the Business Partnership program offers an intentional means for facilitating conversations between MASE members and our friends in business who provide us with valuable services and products that support student outcomes. Many Business Partners have also been educators, providing even greater insight into evidence based practices.

The MASE Business Partnership program not only facilitates conversations regarding best practices and services, it creates a vehicle for lobbying efforts on common legislative initiatives. When the educational community and the business community are united under a legislative platform or position, greater strength and “buy in” is developed. There is likely greater consumer and constituent confidence when we partner around shared ideas and values.

The Business Partnership program provides additional revenue to help support the mission of MASE. This comes in the form of supporting the role of the Executive Director as the voice of MASE in policy development at the legislative and state levels. John Klaber has been instrumental to the organization as he partners on our behalf with numerous stakeholder groups. John has been able to secure several business partnerships by helping our partners see the value in aligning with our organization. In addition to financially supporting the Executive Director role, the Business Partnership program helps to keep MASE membership dues and fees at affordable levels and helps to insure that registration for MASE professional development is affordable.

The Business Partnership program cannot sustain or grow without the assistance of MASE members. Each of you have an opportunity to reach out the business partners you work with to thank them for their commitment to MASE or if they are not a business partner, encourage them to consider being a MASE Business Partner. The MASE Business Partner Adhoc Committee developed talking points you can use to help recruit a Business Partner. These talking points used along with your own style of influence can help us sustain and grow our program.

Talking Points

- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education

support learners in the areas of Special Education, English Learners, Title I, II, and III, Health Services, Section 504, Early Childhood Education, and more. Over 130,000 students alone are receiving special education services.

- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education employ 1,000's of staff state-wide who use products and services that support student outcomes.
- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education has access to millions of dollars intended to support students in the general education curriculum as well as through specially designed instruction. We make curriculum, product, and services decisions!
- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education is a very close network. Many decisions for using specific products and services begin by recommendations to colleagues.
- MASE members want to collaborate with Business Partners in the development of quality evidence based products and services. We have a vested interest in their success as it insures we have tools to support our learners.

Feel free to refer potential Business Partners to John Klaber, the MASE Executive Director or Lori Fildes, the MASE Treasurer to discuss the TIER system of membership and to answer any additional questions they may have. Business Partners who would like more information can find it at www.mnase.org.

Thank you for your support of this work. We cannot be successful in this effort without you. Special thanks to the MASE Business Partner Adhoc Committee for their continued vision:

Tony Pierce, Ass't. Principal of Special Services, Grand Rapids School District

Shannon Erickson, Director of Special Education, Fergus Falls Special Education

Stephanie Corbey, Exec. Dir. of Individualized Student Svcs., Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School

Mary Clarkson, Executive Director of Special Programs, Richfield Public Schools

Cherie Johnson, Director of Special Education, Goodhue County Education District 601

John Klaber, MASE Executive Director

Lori Fildes, MASE Treasurer ●

The “20-80” Rule: It Doesn’t take Much Effort to Obtain Needed Results

School improvement and data-based decision-making are terms that school leaders hear numerous times per day. Program evaluation is a way of bringing these two terms together by systematically focusing on data collection and analysis to improve programs and ultimately schools and student outcomes. With the budget season approaching, imagine that you had the following evaluation information available to you as you were constructing your budget for the following year.

Students of teachers receiving support from instructional coaches gained 4 months more learning than students of teachers who did not receive coaching.

Students of teachers who received professional development in math fared no better than students of teachers who did not receive the professional development.

Elementary buildings implementing an MTSS framework saw a 50% reduction in SLD prevalence over 3 years.

Students who used on-line “flex books” performed similarly on standardized tests of achievement than students who used traditional textbooks.

How might this information impact your budgeting, and more importantly, student achievement? You might decide to invest more resources into instructional coaching, re-examine your professional development in the area math, invest resources in scaling MTSS up into secondary settings, and continue investing in on-line flex books. All of these scenarios are examples of evaluating specific policies, programs, approaches, and frameworks.

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006) defines program evaluation as examining initiatives the school or district has undertaken to answer the question, “Is what we are doing working?” Along with determining the effectiveness of a program or practice, program evaluation provides information on what aspects of the program or practice can be improved. In fact, many school leaders may agree that program evaluation is important, but they often think they don’t have the time or skills needed to carry out an evaluation. This assumption was confirmed by a recent statewide needs assessment conducted by CAREI in 2016 finding that 51% of administrators rated their capacity to evaluate policies and programs as poor. High-quality program evaluation was rated as infrequent due to lack of time (78%), inadequate staffing/expertise (63%), and cost (53%).

Some folks have suggested that educators do have the skills and ability to evaluate programs since expertise in the topic is not needed to carry out a useful program evaluation (McNamara, 1998). Now, if you noticed the “20-80” rule in the title, here is where that rule applies. The rule states that 20% of effort generates 80% of the needed results. In plain English, it is better to do some evaluation than to do no evaluation at all! Many evaluation techniques can be utilized by school districts in day to day practice to make use of existing data in a practical manner for teachers and school leaders. The main challenge is to conduct evaluations that provide useful data and also balance the amount of time and effort needed by staff to carry out evaluation activities.

Organizing the program evaluation process involves answering three important questions:

- What are we looking for?
- How will we look for it?
- How will we use the data?

To determine what to look for, leaders will need to determine if they are interested in formative or summative evaluation information (or both). Formative program evaluation involves collecting information during the implementation of a program to ensure that the



Kim Gibbons

Associate Director
Center for Applied Research
and Educational Improvement

2017 MASE Leadership Issues (Formerly "Rural Issues")

January 13 - LOCATION TBD (mid-state location — stay tuned for this information - it will be updated at mnase.org)

April 17 - Benton Stearns Education District, Sartell

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!

The “20-80” Rule continued on page 16.

The "20-80" Rule from page 15.

program is being implemented with fidelity. Formative evaluation helps improve implementation and identify areas where changes are needed to ensure that intended outcomes are met. Summative evaluation evaluates a program after implementation to see if the desired goal has been reached. For example, suppose your district recently adopted a new reading curriculum. A formative evaluation would be useful in making sure that teachers are implementing the new curriculum as intended and receiving enough support during implementation. If not, then resources can be directed toward providing more support during implementation. A summative evaluation might occur at the end of year to determine the percentage of students who made adequate reading growth during the school year.

Once you determine what you are looking for, the next question is to determine how you will look for it. A prerequisite for "how" is to develop a simple and clear plan of action. This action plan should include due dates and timelines and identification of needed resources. In addition, the components of the evaluation will need to be identified along with designations of who will be responsible for overseeing each component. The final step is to determine how to use the data. Using the data involves analyzing it and making meaning out of the results. Remember that multiple data sources will often inform each question you are trying to answer. Triangulating your data will strengthen the judgments you make about the evaluation. Once the steps have been completed, it is time to summarize and communicate the results to your key stakeholders and decision makers. Keep it simple. Provide an executive summary with the purpose of the evaluation, findings by questions, conclusions and recommendations.

CAREI has been helping school districts and other non-profits conduct program evaluations for over 25 years! We have over 200 technical reports on our website (www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/). This year, we are working with the Anoka-Hennepin School District to complete an audit of special education programs and practices in the district. We are looking at the extent to which programs are aligned with research and best practices, appropriately staffed, and whether teachers have the necessary skills to be successful with their students. We are here to help you determine the effectiveness of programs and to make recommendations on next steps needed to reach your goals. We are also available to help "audit" existing frameworks and practices to provide you with information for making programs and frameworks better (e.g., continual improvement). Feel free to give me a call at 612-625-9751. ●

Mind Your PWNs from page 13.

PWN that describes the parent's concerns and outlines the reasons for the team's proposal demonstrates that the parent's input was considered, and that the team had legitimate reasons for its proposal. If the parent subsequently files a complaint regarding the proposed placement, a thorough PWN could be strong evidence that the district complied with the applicable legal standards and provided the parent a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the child's IEP.

A PWN should be based on the team agenda and meeting notes. Thus, to support a thorough PWN, the agenda and the meeting notes should both be thorough and accurate as well. Note takers should avoid conclusory statements; completeness is key. Just as writing what is discussed at the meeting in a PWN is evidence of consideration, excluding meeting topics can be construed as evidence they were not discussed. If a parent brings three doctor's notes to an IEP meeting and the PWN only reflects two, this oversight may be used against the district as evidence the third note was not reviewed. The fact that a parent did not make an issue out of a particular decision at the IEP meeting does not necessarily mean that the decision will not be the basis for a complaint or hearing request later on.

As the IDEA requires school districts to send a PWN, it is in the district's best interest to maintain a record of how and when it sends PWN to parents. If possible, maintaining a record of how parents actually received the PWN is beneficial as well.

While there are defenses for districts if IEP teams fail to properly execute PWNs, it is always preferable to proactively avoid any basis for complaint on the front end. Including all legal requirements, drafting complete PWNs, and preparing for challenges to specific provisions of the document could be the basis for the successful defense of a legal challenge. ●

WELCOME

new members

- Joshua Ashton**, Special Education Coordinator, MTS MN Connections Academy
- Brenda Blackmore**, Director of Special Education, St. Cloud Area Schools
- Holly Booth**, Special Education Supervisor, St. Cloud Area Schools
- Donna Bratsch**, Special Education Teacher, Royalton Public School District
- Wendy Cirksema**, Director of Special Services, Owatonna Schools
- Alisha Dalsin**, Special Education Coordinator, Goodhue County Education District
- Stephanie Diaz-Celon**, Special Education Supervisor, Anoka-Hennepin School District
- Renae Donaghue**, Special Education Supervisor, Bemidji Regional Interdistrict Council
- Kristina Edman**, Due Process Facilitator, Warroad Public Schools
- Chad Erichsrud**, Special Education Coordinator, Forest Lake Area Schools
- Hope Fagerland**, Special Education Coordinator/Teacher, St. Anthony-New Brighton School District
- Michelle Ferris**, Executive Director of Student Support Services, Minnetonka Public Schools
- Tom Hannasch**, Special Education Supervisor, St. Cloud Area Schools
- Heather Harms**, Assistant Director of Special Education, Waseca Public Schools
- Lindsey Horowitz**, Assistant Director of Special Education, South St. Paul Public Schools
- Kristen Johnson**, Special Education Coordinator, Spring Lake Park Schools
- Denise Kennedy**, Special Education Coordinator, Southern MN Special Education Consortium
- Amanda Legrey**, School Psychologist, Anoka-Hennepin School District
- Karen Lerfald**, Special Education Coordinator, Hutchinson Public Schools
- Stephanie Mars**, Special Education Administrative Intern, Anoka-Hennepin School District
- Scott Masten**, Director of Special Education, Lake Agassiz Special Education Cooperative
- Sara McMonagle**, Special Education Coordinator, River Bend Education District
- Julie Menage**, Special Education Coordinator, SWWC Service Cooperative
- Carmen Meyer**, Special Education Supervisor, Bloomington Public Schools
- Julie Midas**, Director of Early Childhood Programs, St. Cloud Area Schools
- Jennifer Middendorf**, Special Education Supervisor, St. Cloud Area Schools
- Alecia Mobley**, Interim Director of Specialized Services, Saint Paul Public Schools
- Kristin Otremba**, Assistant Director of Special Services, Albert Lea Area Schools
- Kristie Redmann**, School Psychologist, Sherburne-N Wright Special Education Cooperative
- Amy Schulz**, Special Education Coordinator, Austin Public Schools
- Lana Talberg**, Assistant Director of Special Education, Sherburne-N Wright Special Education Cooperative
- Amy York**, Assistant Director of Special Education, Hiawatha Valley Education District

MASE CALENDAR

2017

January 13

MASE Leadership Issues

Location TBD (mid-state location) - www.mnase.org
for updates

February 3

MASE Professional Development Committee
Meeting

10am – 2pm

MASE Offices, St. Paul

March 2

MASE Day at the Capitol

March 3

Special Education Directors' Forum

8 am-4:30 pm

Conference Center B, Rooms 15 and 16

Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul

March 8

MASE Board of Directors Meeting

MASE New Leaders Cohort

Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

March 9-10

MASA/MASE Spring Conference

Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

April 17

MASE Leadership Issues

10 am-2 pm

Benton Stearns Education District, Sartell

May 10

MASE New Leader's Cohort

Madden's Conference Center, Brainerd

May 10-12

MASE Best Practices

Madden's on Gull Lake, Brainerd

May 19

Special Education Directors' Forum

8 am-4:30 pm

Conference Center B, Rooms 15 and 16

Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul

June 15-16

MASE Board Retreat

Crowne Plaza Minneapolis West, Plymouth

July 1

MASE Membership Renewal

September 8

Special Education Directors' Forum

8 am-4:30 pm

Conference Center B, Rooms 15 and 16

Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul

October 25

MASE Board of Directors Meeting

Cragun's Brainerd

October 25-27

MASE Fall Leadership Conference

Cragun's, Brainerd

December 8

Special Education Directors' Forum

8 am-4:30 pm

Conference Center B, Rooms 15 and 16

Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul