

MASE New Leaders Cohort
October 21, 2020
Presenter Biographies

Nan Records

Regional Low Incidence Facilitator
Sourcewell
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Nan Records is the Regional Low Incidence Facilitator with Sourcewell, formerly known as the National Joint Powers Alliance. She previously served 15 years as the Director of Special Education in the Sherburne and Northern Wright Special Education Cooperative. Prior to her position as director, Nan was a Coordinator for 11 years in the same organization. Nan is very active in MASE and MASA; she currently serves on various committees, and has been a member of both the MASE and MASA Board of Directors. Nan has also received numerous awards for her work with special education children. Most recently, Nan received the 2015 MASE Legacy Award for her commitment to encouraging, developing, and mentoring leaders who reflect the MASE mission.

Danielle Theis (pronounced like rice)

Director of Special Education
Owatonna Public Schools
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Danielle Theis has been working successfully with youth who experience mental health and behavioral challenges since 1990. She prides herself in assisting schools in becoming trauma responsive. Danielle is a licensed psychotherapist, Director of Special Education, and K-12 Principal. Danielle has served as the Administrator in Setting IV programs in public schools for seven years. Danielle was Principal of New Dominion School of Gerard Academy for ten years serving students within a residential treatment facility. Danielle currently serves as the Director of Special Services for Owatonna Public Schools. Danielle is one of 30 Master Trainers for Life Space Crisis Intervention in the world. She is acknowledged by the Minnesota Department of Education as an expert in reducing restrictive procedures and working effectively with children who display significant behavioral challenges. Danielle provides trainings and consultative services to support children experiencing mental health and behavioral challenges, and the adults who serve them, in our schools and communities.

Melissa Schaller

Executive Director of Special Education

Intermediate School District 917
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Melissa Schaller is the Director of Special Education for Intermediate School District 917 where she is in her 13th year serving its nine member school districts. Melissa is responsible for oversight of district special education programming including 25 sites, approximately 500 staff, and a budget of more than 39 million dollars. Prior to joining ISD 917, Melissa was the Director of Special Education for the Austin Public School District. She has served many state level organizations in the field of education including serving as president of the executive board of both Minnesota Administrators for Special Education and Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children. Currently, she is pursuing her PhD at the University of Minnesota in Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Nicole Woodward

St. Croix River Ed. District
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Nicole Woodward has been the Director of Special Education of the St. Croix River Education District since 2015. Her previous positions at SCRED include School Psychologist and Unique Learners Manager. Woodward is knowledgeable in all areas of special education, from due process regulations to creating unique programming for the most challenging student cases. She has a special skill of explaining difficult concepts that are easy to understand and is patient with others while they are learning new things. Woodward is an effective communicator and connector allowing her to navigate difficult conversations with student, staff, and parents, and in facilitating professional learning opportunities. Nicole was the recipient of the MASE 2020 New Special Education Leader Award. She received the award for her commitment to students with disabilities and their families and her active involvement in professional and community affairs.

Amy Ernst

Director of Special Education
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Amy Ernst is the Director of Special Education for Buffalo Hanover Montrose School District. This is her 6th year serving BHM schools and her 12th year in special education leadership. Outside of school, you can find her spending her time with her husband Mark, four daughters and two step-sons.