



IMPACT

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Winter, 2008

Goals of MASE

by Deb Wall,
2008-09 MASE President
and Director of Special Education,
Forest Lake Area Schools

The MASE Board approved two goals for the 2008-2009 school year at the October Board Meeting. The first goal, to examine the need and feasibility of having a MASE Executive Director position will be addressed by a small group of members who have volunteered to take a look at this issue and bring a recommendation back to the board in June 2009. Any member who has an opinion or good thoughts on this idea, one way or the other, should feel free to contact Kim Gibbons, Duane Borgerson, Reggie Engebritsen or me. We will appreciate your thoughts as we take a look at the structure and financial requirements of other organizations that have an executive director position.

The second goal, to expand relationships with the professional organizations of our colleagues with whom we work on a daily basis, involves formally expanding our collegial dialogue with principals, curriculum directors, and business managers, and maintaining our relationships with PACER, MDE, ARC, The Autism Society of Minnesota and other parent organizations. As administrators for special education, we have always known that our effectiveness in assuring that programs for students with disabilities have the support they need

at the building level depends on our ability to communicate and work with the principals in our districts and the directors at the district office level. The culture of inclusion and high expectations for students with disabilities does not create itself. It must be talked about at a variety of levels; conferences, newsletters, seminars, college courses, etc. We must formalize the informal discussions we have been having at the district level.



Deb Wall

To that end, I asked Fred Storti, Executive Director for the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association, if he would write an article for our newsletter addressing the importance of access to the curriculum for students with disabilities. Fred willingly and graciously said yes and his article appears in this edition. Thank you, Fred. •

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2009 Legislative Platform

Special Education Funding

MASE supports adequate and predictable funding for Minnesota's public schools that includes a cost-based, fully funded revenue system for special education.

- MASE believes paying for federal and state mandates to provide free and appropriate services for students receiving special education is a complex and expensive undertaking that requires significant state support. MASE supports adoption of the funding framework proposed by P.S. Minnesota, as it reflects a comprehensive formula for adequately funding Minnesota schools.
- MASE believes that access to timely, accurate data is necessary in order to make strategic decisions regarding allocation of resources. MASE supports the development and implementation of a modern, integrated database to replace the fragmented and outdated data systems employed by MDE (i.e., MARSS, UFARS, EDRS, STARS, EMAP) and the various student, financial and other data management systems utilized by districts.
 - MASE believes a single, integrated database would increase the efficiency and accuracy of data available to legislators, MDE and district staff.
 - MASE believes a single, integrated database would greatly expand data manipulation and analysis options available to legislators, MDE and district staff.
 - MASE believes an integrated database would greatly reduce or eliminate duplication of data entry by districts, saving countless hours of district staff time.
 - MASE believes that adopting a single, state-wide integrated database would result in significant long-term financial savings as districts would no longer need to purchase separate student, financial and other data management systems that do not communicate directly to MDE databases.
 - MASE believes that adopting a single, statewide integrated database would facilitate the efficient, electronic exchange of data between schools as students move from one district to another.

- MASE believes providing dedicated categorical aid for early identification and intervention programs for at-risk students will help reduce the need for and the cost of long-term special education services.
- MASE believes adequate funding for special education preserves the integrity of general education funding.
- MASE believes requirements that exceed federal mandates increase costs to local districts.

Coordinated Services

MASE supports a thorough review of the roles and responsibilities of all public departments which provide services to children with disabilities.

- MASE believes that schools improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities, and when other public agencies fulfill their statutory roles and responsibility for this population, positive outcomes are enhanced.
- MASE believes that school district responsibilities for the provision of transition services should be limited to the attainment of educational outcomes that lead to a diploma.
 - MASE supports the clarification of educational standards and expectations that lead to a diploma.
 - MASE supports legislation that clarifies when and how graduation expectations can be reasonably modified for students with disabilities.
- MASE believes that non-education agencies can play a larger role in ensuring self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities by providing adequate funding and non-school supports outside of the school day.
 - MASE supports the creation of standards under which county representatives would be empowered to authorize the expenditure of funds to serve students at the time of the IEP meeting or other school based meeting.
- MASE believes that due process procedural requirements should be the responsibility of the Minnesota State Academies as the serving district.

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- MASE believes mental health services for children are neither adequately funded nor consistently supported by the counties and state.

Licensure and Teacher Retention

MASE supports efforts to increase the number and retention of licensed special educators.

- MASE believes due process requirements that exceed federal mandates add stress to special education teachers and place Minnesota districts at the breaking point in terms of recruiting and retaining quality special education staff.
- MASE believes in the expansion of special education training programs and alternative educational paths to special education licensure to address the current and future demands of districts for qualified, licensed special education teachers.
- MASE believes in the portability of retirement credits from other states to encourage special education teachers to transfer to Minnesota and fill district vacancies.
- MASE believes that the continuation of community expert status, limited licenses, and variances for those who meet the qualifications to fill the numerous vacancies in special education when a qualified license applicant is not available is important for providing service to students with disabilities due to the shortage of licensed special education teachers.
- MASE believes retention of existing teachers is critical and supports the findings in the Workload Considerations for Effective Special Education to provide a supportive environment and increase the retention of special education staff.
- MASE believes it is not necessary to go forward with paraprofessional credentialing because it does not add value to the system and will increase the difficulty districts currently have in filling paraprofessional positions.
- MASE believes credentialing initiatives currently proposed will add significant costs for districts.
- MASE believes No Child Left Behind and IDEA already set high standards for paraprofessionals.
- MASE believes a strong focus on training at the local district level is the key to successful

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IMPACT is your newsletter and we encourage your input! If you have ideas or an article to share, please contact us at the MASE offices—651/645-6272 or email us at members@mnasa.org.

New Memo Illustrates Shift in MDE Position on Open Enrollment of Disabled Students



Nancy Blumstein



Christian Schafer

by Nancy E. Blumstein, Attorney and Christian R. Shafer, Attorney at Roszak & Maloney, P.A.

A recent guidance memo from the Minnesota Department of Education (“MDE”) addresses the question of whether, and to what extent, school districts are permitted to limit the open enrollment of disabled students into their special education programs. While we have previously addressed the MDE position on open enrollment of disabled students in articles for this newsletter, we believe that the recent guidance memo represents a significant enough departure from MDE’s long-standing position to warrant revisiting this topic.

The Minnesota Enrollment Options Program enables any student to attend a school or program in a non-resident school district. Minn. Stat. § 124D.03. However, the statute permits school districts some latitude to close the enrollment of non-resident students into the district. Specifically, the statute provides:

Subd. 2. Limited Enrollment of Non-Resident Pupils.

(a) A school board may, by resolution, limit the enrollment of nonresident pupils into its schools *or programs* according to this section to a number of not less than the lesser of:

1. one percent of the total enrollment at each grade level in the district; or
2. the number of district residents at the grade level enrolled in a nonresident district according to this section.

(b) A district that limits enrollment of nonresident pupils under paragraph (a) shall report to the commissioner by July 15 on the number of nonresident pupils denied admission due to the limitations on enrollment of non-resident pupils.

Minn. Stat. § 124D.03, Subd. 2 (emphasis added).

The confusion with this statute arises as a result of the legislature’s failure to define how the term “program” is to be interpreted. As a result of this failure, districts are left without specific guidance in determining

whether, and to what extent, the statute would permit a district to decline an open enrollment application on the basis of the level of enrollment in a particular program of special education services an applicant requires.

Subdivision 6 of the statute sheds some light on the issue. According to subdivision 6, a school board may “adopt, by resolution, specific standards for acceptance or rejection of applications.” Subdivision 6 explains the basis on which these standards can and cannot be grounded. Specifically, the subdivision states that standards “may include *the capacity of a program, class, or school building*. The school board may not reject applicants for enrollment in a particular grade level if the nonresident enrollment at that grade level does not exceed the limit set by the board under subdivision 2. Standards may not include previous academic achievement, athletic or other extracurricular ability, *disabling conditions*, proficiency in the English language, previous disciplinary proceedings, or the student’s district of residence” (emphasis added).

Thus, according to Subdivision 6, school districts may make open enrollment decisions based on capacity of particular programs. However, the question still remains as to what the term “program” means. Because of this confusion, districts have lacked direction as to whether and how they can limit open enrollment into special education programs.

From the districts’ point of view, it would be best to define the term “program” narrowly to mean a certain type of special education classroom or service. Such an interpretation would permit a school district to exclude special education students seeking open enrollment into those special education programs that have reached maximum capacity. Without such a narrow definition, it is arguable that the open enrollment statute could require a district to either exceed the applicable student-teacher ratios set forth in Minnesota Rule 3525.2340 or hire additional staff to meet those requirements.

However, if a district defines “program” narrowly, and excludes a student from open enrolling because of the special education or service they need, it could be argued that a district would be making an open enrollment decision based on the student’s disability. Such an argument, if successful, would place the district in the position of having violated Subdivision 6 of the Enrollment Options Law, as discussed above, and expose it to potential disability discrimination

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claims under both Minnesota (the Minnesota Human Rights Act) and Federal (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) law.

Throughout the years, the MDE has provided Minnesota school districts with some direction, in the form of various guidance memos, on this issue. In many of these memos, the MDE opined that the term “program” could be interpreted narrowly, without any appearance of discrimination, to mean a specific educational program, but only if the school district had already met its enrollment obligations under Subd. 3 of the statute and the school board had established, as written policies, clear and rationally based caseload/classroom student/teacher ratios beforehand.

On August 16, 2001, the MDE issued a guidance memo that departed from its long-standing policy on this issue. This memo counseled school districts that it *could be* considered discriminatory to deny open enrollment of a disabled student at a time when the district was still accepting open enrollment applications from students in the same grade level. The MDE advised that the safest course of for districts to follow is to interpret the terms “program” and “grade level” to be synonymous for the purpose of the statute.

On October 17, 2008, the MDE released its most recent memorandum addressing this issue. This guidance letter, while purporting to “affirm” its August 16, 2001, position, goes beyond the previous MDE policy and indicates that MDE now takes a very firm stance on this issue.

The October 17, 2008 letter advises that:

“when accepting or rejecting applications for open enrollment, a school district must use the same procedures for students with disabilities that it uses for students without disabilities. Thus, in the absence of grade level closure pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 124D.03, Subd. 2, the use of program, class, or building capacity standards to deny open enrollment to students with disabilities *constitutes disability discrimination* in violation of the law and is inconsistent with the Enrollment Options Program statute” (emphasis added).

The October 17, 2008 letter sums up the MDE position by stating that “[p]ut simply, if a district continues to open enroll students without disabilities, then its programs, classrooms, and buildings must also be open to students without disabilities. The benefit of open enrollment must be offered on an equal basis—a school district may *never use disability status to deny admission*” (emphasis added).

For example, under the MDE’s analysis, a district with a total of 300 regular and special education students in 3rd grade could *only* close its enrollment to nonresident disabled 3rd grade students if: 1) the district’s school board had passed a resolution setting capacity levels; 2) the district also closed its enrollment to all 3rd grade open enrolling students;

and 3) had already either accepted three non-resident 3rd grade students or had accepted the same number of 3rd grade students into the district as had open enrolled in other districts, whichever number is less. In MDE’s opinion, *any other exclusion or denial* of open enrollment constitutes discrimination.

It is up to the individual school districts to decide how to react to the October 17, 2008, memo. While technically only a guidance memo, the memo is couched in such strong terms that it is a near certainty that the MDE would consider it discriminatory for a district to deny open enrollment to a disabled student unless the district was also denying open enrollment to other students in the same grade level. However, the meaning of the word “program” has not been litigated in the context of the Minnesota Open Enrollment Act, and therefore it is unclear how a Court or administrative agency, such as the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (“MDHR”) or the federal Office of Civil Rights (“OCR”) would view such an act by a school district.

Nevertheless, it may be the safest course of action for school districts to adopt the MDE’s analysis. However, adopting the MDE’s analysis could potentially place a school district in the position of being unable to deny open enrollment on the basis that a specific special education program is already filled to its capacity.

One alternative solution is for a school board to adopt a policy establishing a maximum capacity for each grade level and stating that the district’s overall capacity limit for each grade level is reached for open enrollment purposes at the point at which any classroom or program service in that grade level reaches its maximum capacity level. This solution would present school districts with a better outcome than being placed in the position of expending limited district funds to hire more staff in order to meet the needs of one or two open enrolled students. Note that this solution is only becomes effective once the numerical limits set forth in Minn. Stat. § 124D.03, Subd. 2 have been met.

Another way for districts to address this issue is legislatively. Legislation could be proposed next session to clear up any uncertainties presented by Minn. Stat. § 124D.03. Probably, the simplest approach to this would be to propose a clear definition for the manner in which the word “program” is to be interpreted under the statute. Pursuing legislative amendments may be an option which MASE may be willing to facilitate for districts. Directors of Special Education may wish to discuss this option at future MASE meetings.

Whatever course your district chooses to follow, keep in mind that this is clearly an area of interest to the MDE. MDE decisions on this issue will likely follow its interpretation, at least in the near future. Even if school districts decide not to propose legislative revisions to the statute, there could well be legislative brewing for this statute. •

Special Education Students Need Core Reading Instruction



P. Fred Storti

by P. Fred Storti
Minnesota Elementary
Principals' Association
Executive Director

Principals today need to be instructional leaders so that all students, general and special education, receive coordinated core reading instruction. The history of educating children with disabilities is primarily one of

separation. An unintended consequence of our Title I and special education service delivery systems has often been that struggling students receive less district instruction in reading when they actually need more.

Breaking the silo culture between general and special education is not an easy task. Historically, state and federal bureaucracies established barriers that promoted pull out services for children with disabilities. That has changed with the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 and coordination of services with No Child Left Behind. In keeping with the growing shift aimed at coordinating both general and special education students, now is the time for general and special education staff to work together. Easier said than done – it takes principal leadership!

So, what are some strategies that principals can use to lead their staff to insure that all students with disabilities receive core reading? According to Michelle Shin, an elementary principal in Illinois and a seasoned RtI leader, we first need to understand the Multi-Tier Model of Response to Intervention and determine if we view RtI as: 1) an eligibility process for determining if a student has a learning disability; or 2) an opportunity to redress years of dissatisfaction with both general and special education?

Assuming you picked #2 and view RtI as opportunity to remedy dissatisfaction, we no longer will:

- wait for students to fail to provide services;
- have a waiting list to be tested for eligibility;
- engage in time consuming, costly assessments not related to instruction or divert talented persons away from providing intervention;
- have special education programs determined by

schedule rather than needs.

We have the research that tells us what students need in order to make progress in reading and now we must find the way to lead and change the system that fragments student learning into one that allows all students to benefit from the core curriculum while offering supplemental instruction for struggling readers.

The RtI three tiered model embodies this. It illustrates that Tier II instruction is on top of or in addition to Tier I instruction, which is the core curriculum. Research has shown us that students who receive only Tier II instruction are not likely to return to the core curriculum because they have fallen further behind. Having been absent from Tier I instruction, students will not have had the same vocabulary and instructional experience that are part of Tier I classroom discussion.

An effective way to provide intervention, enrichment, and core reading curriculum is to redesign the master schedule into a block schedule that will get the intended results. The first critical step involves teachers buying in and being committed to a learning environment built around a 90-minute literacy block for all children. Within that time frame, teachers in all classrooms could fully implement a comprehensive and balanced literacy model including guided, shared, independent reading and writing with vocabulary and word study instruction. All general and special education students would receive high quality instruction from grade level teachers. There would be no pullouts – instead, remedial support would be provided in the classroom with responsibility shared with special education and general education teachers.

With all students receiving reading instruction in the classroom, grade level teams can now administer regular formative assessments in order to determine specific learning needs and decide which are in need of intervention and which are ready for enrichment.

To provide for intervention and enrichment, a 45 minute parallel block could be established for each grade level at which time all new instruction – staff and students are regrouped – move to an instructional space to receive structured, small group intervention instruction. By using the schools' special education and Title I staff, the goal is to provide small group **Core Reading Instruction ... Continued on Page 7**

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paraprofessional support for students with disabilities.

MASE supports expansion of special education training programs and the development of alternative educational pathways to special education licensure.

- MASE believes in providing more flexibility to focus on student needs rather than disability labels by creating a multi-disability special education license.
 - MASE believes that the creation of a multi-disability license covering teachers serving students with disabilities will provide the flexibility to focus on student needs rather than disability labels.
 - MASE believes that there should not be any additional disability specific licenses and focus be placed on appropriate training and professional development.

Alignment with Federal IDEA Regulations

MASE supports the need to regularly review all Minnesota rules and statutes pertaining to the provision of special education and related services for students with disabilities in order to monitor where adjustments may be required to align Minnesota standards with federal requirements.

- MASE believes regular, comprehensive review should be completed by special education

stakeholders comparing Minnesota Special Education Rules and Statutes to federal requirements and standards.

- MASE believes the expansion of Minnesota rules and regulations beyond federal standards often translates into increased paperwork and procedural requirements which directly impact the amount of direct instructional time for staff working with students.
- MASE believes Alignment of Minnesota rules and statutes with federal standards reduces potential conflict and provides clarity in the implementation of quality special education and related services.
- MASE believes the MDE must seek explicit legislative authority to promulgate future rule packages.
 - MASE encourages MDE to effectively utilize the collective wisdom of parents and special education professionals and follow a consensus driven decision making model in future rule making initiatives.
- MASE believes the MDE complaint investigation process and procedures should be outlined in statute.
- MASE believes MDE should change special education policy through legislation and rule making, not via the issuance of policy memos and/or complaint decisions.

Core Reading Instruction ... Continued from Page 6

targeted instruction. Students who are mastering core skills are regrouped during the parallel block for enrichment.

Teacher collaboration is critical to insuring parallel block time is used effectively to meet the diverse needs of all students.

By reassessing your beliefs about RtI and master schedules, principals can lead staff's to provide systematic differentiated instruction for our diverse general and special education students. In this structure, every student is guaranteed a timely, structured intervention and core reading curriculum of 225 minutes per week within the school day.

It takes two to four years to effectively change the system to include implementing universal screening,

using your data system to solve problems, adjust your staff development plan based on your data and commit to a new way of scheduling. Deploying general and special education staff to more effectively educate all students in the reading core curriculum while coordinating intervention and enrichment literacy instruction is key to increasing student achievement.

“Now is the time that we must choose between what is right, and what is easy.” Albus Dumbledore from Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.

Special Education Licensure Task Force

by **Scott Hare,**
Director of Special Services
Belle Plaine, Jordan, and Montgomery-Lonsdale
Schools
and MASE Treasurer

Last spring, the Minnesota Board of Teaching decided to go forward with a Special Education Task Force to review special education licensure. The Board had two objectives: 1) To conduct a comprehensive review of Minnesota's licensure structure for serving students with exceptionalities, including both disabilities and gifts. 2) To make recommendations to the MN Board of Teaching regarding the preparation of special education teachers and all teachers serving students with exceptionalities. The process consists of three phases. Phase I, currently in process has members from several diverse groups and associations studying and discussing the current licensure standards and structure, their appropriateness, and what other states have in place for special education teacher licensure. Phase II would explore in smaller subgroups the recommendation from Phase I and develop draft recommendations for the Phase III group. The goal would be for the group to make recommendations regarding teacher licensure for special education

teachers to the Board's Advisory Committee in May, 2009.

Representing MASE are Scott Hare, Director of Special Services for Belle Plaine, Jordan, and Montgomery-Lonsdale; Eric Melbye, Director of Special Education for the Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative; and Renae Ouillette, Director of Special Services for Lakeville. Also involved is Lori Fildes, Director of Special Services for Wayzata representing the Association of Metropolitan School Districts. Nearly completing Phase I at the time of writing this article, I can comment that there has been a healthy and very respectful discussion on the current license structure and the core standards for special education teachers. With one meeting left, the group is coming to consensus in drafting a recommendation for the next phase. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact one of the above mentioned members of this task force. •

MASA, MSBA, Parents United and MinnSPRA present a professional development opportunity...

Community Conversations

Building relationships in support of public education

In this economic and social climate, how do school board members and administrators build support for their schools?

Attend this workshop to learn how to lead collaborative conversations about wicked, complex problems facing public education. Beyond traditional meetings, collaborative community conversations are a powerful way to generate excitement in support of education and other social causes. Participants will also explore current public opinions about education revealed in a recent survey conducted by Decision Resources.

Wednesday, Jan. 14

1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Hilton Hotel, Minneapolis
Fee: \$50, walk-ins add \$10

Register at:
www.mnmsba.org
www.mnasa.org

Questions?
Contact: 1.800.324.4459

You will learn about:

- The serious implications of a disengaged citizenry
- A new approach to wicked problems
- Collaborative conversations and a chance to experience the process
- Tactics and resources for your community conversations

Presenters:

Ken Dragseth, Former Superintendent of the Year and current partner School Exec Connect
Deb Gurke, Governance Consultant
Wisconsin Association of School Boards



MASE supports members' leadership by shaping policies and practices that impact the quality of education for children and youth who have disabilities.
— Mission approved by the MASE Board of Directors, May 29, 2003

PROFESSIONAL *development*

What's Happening with Professional Development? Lots!!!

by Nan Records
Director of Special Education
Sherburne-N. Wright Special Education
Cooperative and
MASE Professional Development Committee Chair

Three to four times a year 20 plus special education directors and coordinators gather at the MASE Rural Issues meetings. Don't let the name fool you... Rural Issues isn't just for Rural Directors!! The agenda is developed at the meeting by those present. Topics include anything from low incidence changes to direct versus indirect services to ECSE programming to transition programs, to discussion around the unintended consequences of being an Education District or Joint Powers Cooperative.

February 6 and April 3, 2009 are the next scheduled meetings to be held in Sartell at the Benton-Stearns Education District Offices. Don't let the name fool...come add to the agenda and lively discussion!

Best Practices with an emphasis on legal topics is back! On May 6-8, 2009 at Madden's Resort, MASE members will once again have the opportunity to hear from top attorneys presenting on the hottest legal topics facing us. Be sure to mark your calendars for this must attend event!

In the months to come, look for information on the MASE Summer Institute to be held at Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids. This year we will gather on August 5-7, 2009 to explore resiliency and reflective leadership.

As well as planning the various professional development opportunities, the Professional Development Committee (PDC) is also hard at work at exploring the possibility of creating a leaders' fellowship similar to the Project Lead SELF. A sub-committee will be exploring formats, content and funding opportunities for such a program. A report by the sub-committee will be provided to the MASE Board at their meeting in June 2009.

Along with that effort, the PDC is also examining our professional development offerings for special education supervisors and coordinators. A group of supervisors and coordinators will meet with PDC members to talk about what MASE can do to better meet their needs.

We all know that professional development is on-going...it truly never stops. With that being said...let the PDC Chair, Nan Records know if you have any suggestions for the committee to consider. Nan can be reached at nan.records@monticello.k12.mn.us.

 **ANNOUNCING** 

**The 2009 MASA & MASE
Spring Conference will be
held on Thursday, March 19
and Friday, March 20th
at the Northland Inn,
Minneapolis!**

Mark your calendars today!

**Visit <http://www.northlandinn.com/>
to find out more information on this
great new venue for our
annual spring conference!**

Improving Outcomes for All Students: Bringing Evidence-Based Practices to Scale

by **Cammy Lehr and Eric Kloos**
Minnesota Department of Education

In June of 2008 Minnesota was one of six states selected to work with the National Center on State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) to build statewide capacity and expand the use of promising, evidence-based practices for K-12 students. The center is federally funded and is led by Dean Fixsen, Karen Blase (U of North Carolina), George Sugai (U of Connecticut), and Rob Horner (U of Oregon).

Purpose

The SISEP Center will provide technical assistance to Minnesota during the next four years to

- Support implementation and scaling-up of evidence-based practices in education settings
- Provide the critical content and foundation for establishing large-scale, sustainable, high-fidelity implementation of effective educational practices
- Improve state level capacity to carry out implementation, organizational change, and systems transformation

Scaling Up Common Principles for Effective Practice (CPEP)

Minnesota's efforts will develop the capacity of schools and districts to implement evidence-based practices effectively. To do this, MDE will develop a model to interface with regional teams in order to provide technical assistance and training related to the key components of implementation and common principles of effective practice.

Key components of implementation include:

- Developing implementation teams at multiple levels
- Systematic attention to professional development
- Stage-based implementation activities
- Organizational and systems change
- Active alignment of policies and procedures to support implementation

Common principles of effective practice include:

- Defined and measurable outcomes
- Data-based evaluation and decision-making
- Use of evidence-based practices
- Levels of support that increase in intensity and precision according to student need
- Collaboration for efficient use of resources
- Implementation as intended within and across systems
- Relevant programmatic tailoring to match community needs

What's Next?

Minnesota is energized to work collaboratively with the SISEP Center, local education agencies and numerous stakeholders to take existing evidence-based practices to scale. Building implementation capacity will begin through the development of management and transformation teams. One of the initial tasks will be to identify a first regional partner. The first regional partner will identify 5-10 schools who will receive training and technical assistance on implementation and application of common principles of effective practice. The training and technical assistance model will draw examples from multiple frameworks, including RTI, PBIS Dropout Prevention, and Reading First. It is anticipated that the initial regional team will then work with an expanded number of schools, and that Minnesota will have the capacity to provide implementation supports throughout the state to promote and sustain high quality evidence-based educational practices. The ability to build stronger connections, realize efficiencies, and improve initiative alignment will help us attain better outcomes for all students in Minnesota schools.

Applications for regional entities interested in partnering on these efforts are anticipated to be available in late January. For questions or more information, contact Cammy Lehr at cammy.lehr@state.mn.us or 651.582.8563.

Minnesota's Budget Situation

by **Brad Lundell**
MASE Lobbyist

The November revenue forecast for the Minnesota state budget came in and, as everyone in the education community probably knows, the news was not good. The \$426 million shortfall for the remainder of this fiscal year combined with the \$4.8 billion shortfall for the coming biennium has produced a projected revenue hole of over \$5.2 billion that will have to be addressed when the Legislature convenes in January, 2009.

The dire straits of the budget situation are going to make the 2009 legislative session extremely interesting. While education was spared cuts the last time the state budget was in this level of shambles, it may be difficult to escape them this time. The primary reason for that was that when the state faced budget problems of nearly this magnitude in 2003, there were a number of reserves that could be tapped to prop up the budget until revenue collections picked up again. This time around, the Governor and Legislature will not have that luxury and will have to look to make cuts or raise taxes.

Of course, this is not good news for Minnesota's education community. There is no question that educational needs for students across-the-board are increasing and with schools being forced to make cuts, often times to vital programs, class sizes will increase, support services will be slashed, and more and more students will fall through the cracks. This turn-of-events could put even more pressure on our already-strapped special education delivery system.

In order to avoid this, the Legislature needs to provide mandate-relief in the area of special education and also emphasize the value of RTI, PBIS, and other early intervention systems. Sometimes, the best time for reform is when resources are dear and that is what we will be looking at this session.

Over the past two sessions, MASE has been central in the progress made in both of these areas. In 2007, MASE worked with legislators to advance RTI and PBIS to help keep students succeeding in the regular education classroom.

The result of those efforts has been a great expansion in the use of these intervention strategies statewide. In 2008, MASE spearheaded an effort to rein in the Minnesota Department of Education's rule-making ability and while nothing substantial was done in regard to the Department's permanent rule-making authority, a number of cost-intensive rules were prevented from taking effect.

MASE should renew efforts in both of these areas during the up-coming legislative session. With continued attention being placed on accountability and the "growth model" of measuring student progress, the opportunity clearly exists for RTI to play a central role in helping define ways to both accurately measure student progress and provide alternative learning methods for students having achievement issues.

The area of department rule-making should also be tackled again. The current framework by which rules are proposed and adopted has basically been in place since the elimination of the State Board of Education in late 1990s. While rule-making in and of itself has created numerous frustrations, it is the issuance of opinions through policy memoranda and other judgments by Minnesota Department of Education staff that has added a more complicated element to the system, as practitioners can provide little or no input to these decisions. While last year's discussion surrounding these practices have slowed the issuance of opinions outside the rule-making process, it would still be best to clearly outline in Minnesota Statutes who is responsible for setting Minnesota's special education policy—in my opinion, that should fall solely on the Legislature—and narrowly outline what can be handled through rules. Here's hoping we can have a healthy and polite discussion regarding this problem. •

Special Thanks to Our 2008 Fall Leadership Conference Sponsors

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MASE Awards Recognize Outstanding Leadership



MASE Distinguished Service Award
MASE Legacy Award
Special Education Administrator of the year Award

Each year, the MASA/MASE Spring Conference 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.

Information packets with award nomination forms will be emailed to all members. Award background information is also available on the MASE web site (www.mnase.org).

Nominations are due by January 30, 2009.

2009 Officer Nominations

Coming Soon!



MASE annual elections are just around the corner.

Watch your e-mail for Officer Nomination forms.

Congratulations to Julie Ladwig for being elected to the position of MASE Secretary during the recent special election.



The Joys Of Winter

By Madeleine Begun Kane

It was windy and snowy. I stumbled.
Then I fell and my keys and phone tumbled
And slid down the ice.
I yelled words not so nice.
"How rude!" an old passerby grumbled.

**Sharing
Our Best** 
special education leadership practices

Plan to attend the
**2009 Best
Practices
Conference**
May 6 - 8, 2009 at
Madden's Lodge, Brainerd

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Mark your calendar for the
**2009 MASE/MASA
Spring Conference**

Thursday-Friday,
March 19 - 20
at the
Northland Inn,
Minneapolis

- Leading Keynote Speakers
- Cutting Edge Breakout Sessions
- Legislative News
- Networking
- Latest Products and Innovations
- Much, much more!

Information will be mailed—and will also be available at www.mnase.org. See you there!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ms. Carina Abate Wright
Special Education
Administrator
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

Ms. Lora Arnott
Director of Special
Education
Faribault Schools

Ms. Barbara Bahnson
Special Education
Coordinator
MN River Valley Special
Education Cooperative

Ms. Sonja Brevik
Director of Programs
Goodhue County Education
District

Mr. Bill Butler
K-12 Asst. Principal/
Coordinator
Glencoe-Silver Lake
Schools

Mrs. Jillian Campbell
Special Education
Coordinator
North Branch Area Schools

Ms. Bonnie Carlson
Director of Special
Education
Innovative Special
Education Services

Mr. Robert Dehnert
Assistant Director of Special
Education
West St. Paul-Mendota
Heights-Eagan Schools

Mrs. Tricia Denzer
Director
of Special Programs
Worthington Schools

Ms. Kate Emmons
Supervisor for Special
Education
Bloomington Schools

Ms. Lindsay Engberg
EBD Teacher/Intern
Goodhue County Education
District

Mr. Jay Fehrman
Manager of Deaf Services
NE Metro 916 Intermediate
District

Ms. Mary Garrison
Special Education
Supervisor
St. Paul Schools

Mr. Daniel Gregory
Special Education
Coordinator
Lionsgate Academy

Ms. Heidi Hahn
Assistant Director of Special
Education
Brainerd Schools

Ms. Lisa Hawthorne
ELSE Department Head
Lakeville Area Schools

Mrs. Sara Heckel
Special Education
Consultant
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

Mrs. Jennifer Hetland
Assistant Director of
Special Education
Intermediate School District
917

Ms. Tricia Hughes
Special Education
Administrator
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

Mrs. Lisa Jaroslowski
Special Education
Coordinator
Innovative Special
Education Services

Ms. Mary Kelly
Student
St. Paul Schools

Ms. Susan Knopik
Student
St. Cloud Area Schools

Ms. Julie Koehler
Special Education
Supervisor
North St. Paul-Maplewood-
Oakdale Schools

Mrs. Karin Kuhn
Special Education
Coordinator
Lakeville Area Schools

Ms. Catherine Kuisle
Assistant Director
Goodhue County Education
District

Ms. Dolly Lastine
Director of Special
Education
Brooklyn Center Schools

Mrs. Stefanie Lender
Psychologist/Special
Education Intern
North St. Paul-Maplewood-
Oakdale Schools

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Ms. Carolyn Sorenson
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White Bear Lake Schools

Mrs. Danielle Theis
Director of Special Services
Austin Schools

Ms. Cathy Tryggestad
Facilitator/Admin. Intern
Mid-State Education District

Mr. J. William Underwood
Special Education
Technology Facilitator
Anoka-Hennepin Schools

Ms. Joanna Vagle
Student
St. Michael-Albertville
Schools

MASE Calendar

Wednesday - Thursday, December 24 - 25

Winter Holidays - MASE Offices Closed

2009

Thursday - Friday, January 1 - 2
Winter Holiday - MASE Offices Closed

Friday, January 23
New Directors Training Session 5
MASE Offices, St. Paul

Wednesday - Friday, February 4 - 6
MN CEC Conference

Friday, February 6
Rural Issues
Benton Stearns Education District, Sartell

Friday, February 13
Newsletter Submissions Due

Wednesday, March 18
MASE Board of Directors Meeting
Northland Inn, Minneapolis North
11 am - 3 pm

Wednesday, March 18
New Directors Training Session 6
Northland Inn, Minneapolis North

Thursday - Friday, March 19 - 20
MASE/MASA Spring Conference
Northland Inn, Minneapolis North

Wednesday - Saturday, April 1 - 4
CEC Annual Convention
Seattle, Washington

Friday, April 3
Rural Issues
Benton Stearns Education District, Sartell

Friday, April 10
Spring Holiday - MASE Offices Closed

Wednesday, May 6
New Directors Training Session 7
Madden's Inn, Brainerd

Wednesday - Friday, May 6 - 8
MASE Best Practices Conference
Madden's Inn, Brainerd
(Wednesday dinner - Friday lunch)

Friday, May 15
Newsletter Submissions Due

Monday, May 25
Memorial Day Holiday - MASE Offices Closed

Thursday - Friday, June 11 - 12
MASE Board of Directors Retreat
Como Zoo & Conservatory, St. Paul

MASA/MASE Staff Profile: Jeanna Quinn

Job Title: Currently, my job title is Associate, Office & Data Management.

How long have you been with MASA/MASE: I am in my ninth year at MASA/MASE.

Tell us about your loved ones (spouse, significant other, children): I have two grown sons (Ryan, 27, and Nathan, 25). I also have a partner, Bill, a three-year-old granddaughter, Madalyn, and a beagle named Mulligan.

What do you most like most about working for MASA/MASE: The thing I most like about working at MASA/MASE is the variety of work! We have to be flexible depending on what is happening at the time. Also, I have formed very close friendships with coworkers in the office. Most everyone has been here a very long time. Here in the MASA/MASE office, we have the system of running things down to a science, which helps in the planning process for workshops and conferences.

One thing you would like the members of MASA/MASE to know about you: Beginning in 2009, I will be shifting jobs to take on some other duties. I will mentor Deb Larson (our new full-time employee) in data management as I shift to managing the MASA Jobsite Online, increasing my role in professional development for events, and supporting MASA/MASE business initiatives. I will continue to provide primary support to SEE and MASA Website Publishing (with the support of Jamie Hultgren).

