

THE COMPETITIVE EDGE



Reforming the Future

Dear Community Leader,

When you look ahead, do you see even greater peace and prosperity for our state, our country and our world? Does your vision for the future include a prepared and enlightened workforce? Do you imagine Minnesota children who have grown into responsible and resilient adults with the potential to influence the world in positive ways? Can you grasp the possibilities of full employment and reduced poverty? Would you like to live in a Minnesota that has the most caring and literate people on the planet? As the world changes and unforeseen challenges and problems arise, can you visualize Minnesota kids as the people who step up and become part of the solution?

Together—today—we are creating the future of Minnesota through our choices, priorities, and commitments. *“The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created – created first in mind and will, created next in activity... The paths are not to be found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.” – John Schaar*

It is time for Minnesotans to build consensus around what our schools and students are expected to accomplish, and then to agree on the resources and revenue mechanisms required for success. It has been estimated that just to meet the standards and accountability measures that are currently in place, Minnesota’s K-12 schools would need to invest an additional \$2 billion dollars annually. The current revenue stream—mix of property, income and sales taxes—is both volatile and unpredictable. We are asking you, as leaders, to promote an overhaul of the existing system to provide greater equity, consistency and outcomes. Our government is required by the Minnesota Constitution to *“make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools.”*

The realization of our constitutional ideals depends upon our willingness to examine and align the resources we allocate with our personal and constitutional priorities. For example:

- **Americans** spent \$9.7 billion in movie theaters and \$23 billion on DVDs last year, according to the National Endowment for the Arts report, yet often failed to provide adequate facilities and funding for public education.
- Total **Minnesota** statewide real per capita county and city/town revenue and real per pupil school revenue have all fallen over the past six-year period.
- Revenue for **Minnesota** public schools has dropped 4.4 percent since 2003.
- Taxpayers in **Minnesota** have paid \$12.5 billion for the Iraq War thus far. For the same amount of money, any of the following could have been provided:
 - ◆ 197,451 music and arts teachers for one year
 - ◆ 1,367,929 scholarships for university students for one year
 - ◆ 838 new elementary schools
 - ◆ 1,820,399 Head Start places for children for one year
 - ◆ 215,047 elementary school teachers for one year
- Taxpayers in **Minnesota** will pay \$2.7 billion for tax cuts for the richest 10% in FY 2009. For the same amount of money, any of the following could have been provided:
 - ◆ 42,860 music and arts teachers for one year
 - ◆ 296,932 scholarships for university students for one year
 - ◆ 182 new elementary schools
 - ◆ 395,148 Head Start places for children for one year
 - ◆ 46,680 elementary school teachers for one year

The absence of an aligned vision for and funding of public education puts our greatness at risk. In the words of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright, “Without your commitment to excellence in our schools, America will gradually slow down.”

- ☑ **We invite you** to participate in keeping Minnesota great by communicating with your neighbors, your community clubs, and your government representatives. Encourage them to examine priorities, establish consensus, reform the collection and distribution of revenues, and plan for long-term prosperity in our state.
- ☑ **We invite you** to contact any of the following people or organizations to get further information or to share your own perspective.
- ☑ **We invite you** to become an active part of your school community. Surveys consistently show that those who have the most interaction with our schools have the greatest appreciation of them.

“The course of the World will be changed by those with the courage to do the patient work of listening, the hard work of thinking, and the risky work of speaking....the only uncertainty is whether it will be changed for better or worse, and therein lies the opportunity for greatness.” – Anonymous



Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)

Members: 590 superintendents, special education directors, central office administrators and service organization providers

Mission: As an organization of visionary leaders, to be the world-class change agent for education through membership empowerment and state of the art training, with a commitment to quality and a focus on the individual and collective welfare of its members.

Contacts: Charles Kyte, Executive Director
1884 Como Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55108
ph: 651-645-6272; fax: 651-645-7518
e-mail: ckyte@mnsa.org

Tom Westerhaus, MASA President
Superintendent, Prior Lake-Savage Schools
4540 Tower Street
Prior Lake, MN 55372-0539
ph: 952-226-0011; fax: 952-226-0199
e-mail: twesterhaus@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)

Members: 1,175 high school and junior/middle school principals and administrators; also sponsors three affiliated organizations: Minnesota Association of Student Councils, Minnesota Association of Honor Societies and Minnesota Association of Secretaries to the Principals

Mission: Promote and conduct activities that advance the effectiveness of middle level and high school administrators and support quality education for youth, advocate the continuing improvement of conditions under which students learn and grow to adulthood, and cooperate with other educational associations.

Contacts: Joann Knuth, Executive Director
1667 N. Snelling Ave., Suite C100
Saint Paul, MN 55108-2131
ph: 651-999-7333; 1-800-430-6716
fax: 651-999-7331
email: jknuth@mail.massp.org

Pat Schmidt, MASSP President
Principal, Hopkins North Junior High School
10700 Cedar Lake Road
Minnetonka, MN 55305
ph: 952-988-4801 fax: 952-988-4869
e-mail: pat_schmidt@hopkins.k12.mn.us

Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)

Members: 950 elementary and middle level principals, assistant principals and other administrators

Mission: Promote and improve education for children and youth, strengthen the role of educational leader for elementary and middle level principals and collaborate with partners in education to achieve these goals.

Contacts: P. Fred Storti, Executive Director
1667 North Snelling Ave. Suite C101
Saint Paul, MN 55108
ph: 651-999-7310, 1-800-642-6807
fax: 651-999-7311
e-mail: pfstorti@mespa.net

Richard Oscarson, MESPA President
Principal, Eastview Elementary School
18060 Ipava Avenue
Lakeville, MN 55044
ph: 952-232-2900; fax: 952-469-7644
e-mail: raoscarson@isd194.k12.mn.us