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Scrapbook Page 24-25
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3. Officers’ Workshop, Marshall
4. Charter School Board Workshop, St. Peter
5. Officers’ Workshop, Maple Grove
6. Township Election Day (if applicable, no meetings or activities from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.)
7. Trust Edge Workshop
8. Officers’ Workshop, Marshall
9. MSBA Board of Directors Meeting
10. MSBA Day at the Capitol

**APRIL 2019**

1. Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop, St. Peter
2. Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop, St. Peter
3. Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop, Rochester
4. Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop, Marshall
5. Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop, Maple Grove
6. Township Election Day (if applicable, no meetings or activities from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.)
7. Trust Edge Workshop
8. Officers’ Workshop, Marshall
9. MSBA Board of Directors Meeting
10. Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop, St. Cloud
11. Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop, Mountain Iron
12. Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop, Fergus Falls
13. MSBA Insurance Trust Meeting
14. Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop, Fergus Falls
15. Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop, Thief River Falls
16. Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop, Maple Grove
17. MSBA Day at the Capitol
18. Memorial Day (no meetings)

**MAY 2019**

8–10. MASBO Annual Conference
16–17. MSBA Board of Directors Meeting
22. Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus Meeting
27. Memorial Day (no meetings)

MSBA thanks arts instructor Robyn Dial and her students at Pelican Rapids High School for sharing their art in this issue.

**COVER ART:**

Ella B.

Contact MSBA’s Bruce Lombard at blombard@mnmsba.org if you’d like to see your students’ art displayed in a future MSBA Journal magazine.
As your new president of the Minnesota School Boards Association, this is my inaugural column. First, I would like to offer a special thank you to my predecessor, Kathy Green. Kathy is an articulate and professional advocate for public education. I am grateful that I was able to shadow her for the past year and look forward to tapping her wisdom during my term.

Each day offers us many opportunities to serve our districts and all 845,404 public school students of Minnesota. Together we represent 333 Minnesota public school boards. I look forward to growing the relationships with those of you I already know and look forward to meeting those of you I haven’t met yet.

When I was appointed to the Jordan School Board in 2006, I quickly realized that there was a lot to learn about the complexities of school finance, education legislation, policy and strategic planning, and the intricacies of how schools operate. I took advantage of any trainings that MSBA offered and found comfort knowing that if I had a question, they were a phone call or email away.

As elected officials representing our public schools, we should lead by example, always learning and expanding our knowledge about our work as board members. We are fortunate to have MSBA as our go-to organization whose mission is to be "a leading advocate for public education, supporting, promoting and strengthening the work of public school boards." MSBA has a myriad of offerings to support us in our work on the board, from "Learning to Lead" workshops teaching new and seasoned board members school board basics, school finance and management, how to be a high-performing team and communicating with our community. I encourage all board members to attend these workshops even if they already have. It is a good refresher for us and we can always learn something new. The many opportunities MSBA offers support us in our work, such as officer and negotiation trainings, superintendent evaluations and search services, and the support of many partner/vendors such as BoardBook, Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus (MSDLAF+) and the MSBA Insurance Trust (MSBAIT). Policy governance sets the parameters for us as we deal with the many complex issues we face as board members. MSBA’s Policy Services has model policies that we can adopt and adapt for our district.

We have a new governor and many new legislators. We have 404 newly elected board members. Our districts are well into the 2018-2019 school year and, as we continually assess where our districts are in line with our vision and strategic plan, we also must be planning for 2019-2020. So now what? I believe that 2019 presents us with reason for much optimism. The work of school board members and school administrators is anything but easy. We represent and serve very diverse districts with diverse and unique challenges. Each of us is tasked with knowing the needs of our individual district and working closely with administration and our constituents to help lay out the strategic direction for our district that will best serve the needs of our students. Every single student deserves a high-quality education, and it is our charge to do our best to make that possible.

One of the most impactful sides of MSBA is their legislative advocacy services. Our lobbyists are highly respected by Minnesota legislators, as well as nationally. Their advice and opinions are sought, as they represent you and our public education needs. Our grass-roots work starts with you. Reach out to the MSBA lobbyists and to your legislators in support of what your district needs so we can most effectively serve our students. Hopefully, progress will be made toward equity in funding, special education funding, and mental health services, to name a few needs.

Each of us comes to our board with unique talents and sets of skills. I believe that a high-functioning board should have members with a diverse set of talents and backgrounds. Each can use their expertise to support board decisions and committee work. I am grateful for the differing gifts that each of my fellow board members brings to our board table in Jordan and at MSBA.

My goal and hopes are that we can work together, supporting our administrators and supporting the work of MSBA with the common goal of offering the best possible educational opportunities to our most valued assets, our students. I look forward to our journey together. Thank you for your continued service and taking the risk of running for public office.

Contact MSBA President Deborah Pauly at dpauly@isd717.org.
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Early Utility Involvement During School Construction Yields Impressive Rebates and Environmental Benefits

Newly opened Mountain Iron-Buhl High School received financial, design guidance by involving its utility company during project planning

By Pam Sarvela, Minnesota Energy Resources Senior Account Manager

A conservation improvement program (CIP) is a statewide, ratepayer-funded grant program administered by electric and natural gas utilities that promotes energy-efficient technologies and offers financial benefits for meeting cost-effectiveness standards. CIPs go by different names, depending on the utility, but they all have one thing in common — they’re most effective when the utility company is included early in the project planning stages.

CIPs can be especially helpful during retrofits and new construction projects, such as the new high school project faced by the Mountain Iron-Buhl School District in Minnesota, which benefitted from its utility company’s input on how to participate.

In the case of Mountain Iron-Buhl, the project manager asked utility Minnesota Energy Resources about the expected natural gas rates after the project was completed. The potential for efficiency rebates was mentioned, which led to more in-depth discussions about specifying high-efficiency equipment with the project’s mechanical contractor/designer and...
The Mountain Iron-Buhl School District paid 15 percent of the $29 million budget for its new high school facilities after involving its utility company during the project planning process.

architect, Architectural Resources Inc. (ARI).

Once the ball got rolling, all parties understood how utility CIP offers could be applied to multiple areas of need: boilers, chillers, rooftop units, lighting and building control systems. This unifying approach allowed all team members to connect with the utility provider and weigh the costs/benefits of implementing more efficient and sustainable equipment options.

“The district’s goal was to construct an energy-efficient facility,” said Reggie Engebritson, Mountain Iron-Buhl School District superintendent. “We wanted a building that would provide the best education at an affordable cost to the students and the community. The available efficiency rebates helped make it more accessible.”

Schools often look at energy-saving opportunities differently than commercial businesses. Instead of demanding a quicker return on investment, schools can think further down the road. Given that this project was the district’s first new high school in 100 years, it’s easy to see how this was seen as a long-term investment. That viewpoint can open some eyes to the benefits of environment-friendly equipment and how energy use can be minimized for decades to come.

For Mountain Iron-Buhl specifically, ARI shared architectural plans with Minnesota Energy Resources’ CIP efficiency program experts, who evaluated the designs and plans, recommending savings opportunities and encouraging high-efficiency equipment. It was ultimately ARI’s decision to recommend energy-efficient equipment to the school district, explaining the immediate financial investment and incentives to expect in return, as well as long-term payback and environmental benefits.

The excitement of enhanced learning environments

The demands and expectations of the new school ran high. Not only did the school district know that enrollment was increasing by 70 students for the upcoming 2018 school year — significant for a small district — various new classes were to be offered that required specialized learning spaces.

The school needed to have labs to handle fabrication, coding, automotive and metals, and specialized rooms for art, choir and band. Plus, advanced technology would be a highlight: robotics, drone-building, hands-on virtual reality and Chinese language classes offered to other schools using a new telepresence system.
A café was to include a restaurant in which students plan, prepare and serve meals. And, the new athletic facilities would boast a modern gymnasium and locker rooms. These expectations could not be met by remodeling the old high school, although an existing structure did play a big part in the project.

Creating a united educational campus

The school district’s direction specified that the new high school be physically connected to the existing Merritt Elementary School. Not only did this plan unite the area’s educational institutions in one convenient location, but it also eased the energy burden, because some systems could be shared between the two schools: boilers and water heater (using natural gas), as well as building controls, heat recovery system, etc. (that don’t directly involve natural gas use).

“A combined facility, both elementary and high school, allowed us to achieve our goal of having a high-efficiency campus,” said Engebritson.

As far as the Mountain Iron-Buhl School District directly connecting with Minnesota Energy Resources, that didn’t occur until installation of the equipment. All the upfront CIP efficiency rebate planning and approval was done through ARI and other team members.

A smart decision that paid off

Of the $29 million budget, the school district paid 15 percent, the state of Minnesota paid 5 percent, and the rest was covered by the Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB). This 13,000-square-mile area of the state includes 50 cities, 132 townships and 15 school districts. Funded by taconite taxes, the IRRRB helps grow stable, livable and healthy communities by providing a variety of grants to local government, educational institutions and nonprofits that promote workforce development and sustainable communities.

“To honor our area’s mining heritage, taconite is used decoratively on the walls and in the flooring,” said Engebritson. “We thought our forward-thinking, energy-friendly facility should properly celebrate the region’s heritage.”

The new Mountain Iron-Buhl High School opened in fall 2018 to overwhelming approval by students, parents and the community. Rebates gained through the CIP include $37,500 for the boilers (shared between the existing elementary school and new high school).

“The district expects savings of 5 to 10 percent on the individual pieces of equipment,” said Engebritson. Plus,
custom rebates are still being delivered for the school’s system controls, food service equipment and exhaust systems.

As complex as coordinating various systems may be from a mechanical contractor’s perspective, participating in a utility CIP is a relatively straightforward process for school districts.

Start by contacting the school district’s utility representative to learn more about how to participate in a CIP. The next step is often to provide project details to the utility to assess for efficiency incentive potential. This step can often be facilitated by the project engineers or contractors who are closer to the technical details.

When it’s clear that the project qualifies for incentives, proceed with construction. Once the project is complete, the utility representative will work with your school to conduct a site inspection, gather project invoices, or whatever else is needed to verify the installation. After final approval, rebates are sent.

“The savings that our district experienced will go directly to improving students’ education through additional curriculum materials and programs,” said Engebrittson. “These would not have been available without the additional funds.”

The earlier, the better

When it comes to schools getting a utility involved in a retrofit or new construction project, the sooner that can happen in the process, the more benefits can be realized. Reviewing the plan while in development sparks ideas for systems and equipment that can make a huge difference down the road and allows for easier implementation. In fact, visionary planners may want to reach out well before a school building referendum is even presented to the public on a ballot. This way, the plan can include high-efficiency equipment and its long-term benefits, explaining all the financial incentives and environmental advantages. This forward thinking instills confidence that a plan is well-thought-out and helps push it ahead smoothly and quickly.

To connect with the Minnesota Energy Resources team, call 866-872-0052 or visit minnesotaenergyresources.com.

Pam Sarvela is a Minnesota Energy Resources senior account manager. You can reach her at pamela.sarvela@minnesotaenergyresources.com
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- Friday, April 26 -- Maple Grove
- Tuesday, April 30 -- Rochester

PHASE IV
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- Thursday, April 4 -- Rochester
- Friday, April 5 -- Marshall
- Wednesday, April 10 -- Mountain Iron
- Thursday, April 11 -- Thief River Falls
- Friday, April 12 -- Fergus Falls
- Wednesday, April 24 -- Maple Grove
It takes “the right stuff” to pass a bond referendum. Read about ISD 181’s successful $145 million referendum at www.widsethsmithnolting.com/brainerd-referendum.
For the 12th straight year, the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs recognized the creative ways school districts and other local governments are finding to deliver services with greater impact and at lower cost.

The Local Government Innovation Awards (LGIA) program is organized in partnership with the Bush Foundation and its Native Nation Building Initiative. The awards are co-sponsored by MSBA, the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, and the Minnesota Association of Townships. The awards recognize projects in five different categories, and name one overall award winner (or “Leading Innovator”) in each: schools, cities, counties, townships, and new this year, Native Nations.

“This year, like every other, we’re struck by the innovation that’s happening in Minnesota,” says Jay Kiedrowski, senior fellow at the Humphrey School’s Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center and LGIA program lead. “It’s always evolving, which is inspiring for the judges to see. The exciting part is sharing all of this innovation with the broader community in hopes that they see opportunities in these innovative models to apply to their own communities.”

Hopkins Public Schools — in partnership with the City of Hopkins and the Gethsemane Church in Hopkins — was named the “Leading Innovator” in 2018 LGIA overall school category for “Hopkins Race and Equity Initiative.”

Hopkins Public Schools will receive a $5,000 grant from the Bush Foundation to continue local government innovation and redesign. See Page 17 to learn about Hopkins’ award-winning initiative.

The other 2018 LGIA-award winning schools or school districts are Burnsville High School, Marshall County Central Schools, Northfield Public Schools, and Osseo Area Schools. Learn about these school programs on Pages 18-21.

Mankato Area Public Schools — in collaboration with the Mahkato Mdewakanton Association and Minnesota State University, Mankato — were winners in the Native Nations Category for “Education Day with the Mahkato Wacipi.” Read about this program on Page 22.
The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota honored the Hopkins Race and Equity Initiative (HREI) with the Local Government Innovation Award. The group was one of four government projects to receive this honor. The project also earned the title of Leading Innovator in the schools category, an additional honor that gives the HREI a $5,000 grant to expand its work. A panel of judges considered submissions for creativity, sustainability, and collaboration.

The HREI is a collaborative effort between Hopkins Public Schools, the City of Hopkins, the Hopkins Police Department, and Gethsemane Lutheran Church. Its mission is to create opportunities that increase awareness and understanding of race and diversity, while promoting a sense of community that welcomes and values all residents. Since its inception, the HREI has sponsored five community conversations about race. In May 2016, the group hosted its first event called “Let’s Talk about Race in Hopkins.” The group has continued to sponsor a fall and spring event around race each year with topics ranging from immigration to book studies to the importance of civility. The strength of the HREI is in the partnership between school, city, police, and faith communities. At a time when the demographics of Hopkins are shifting to a more diverse community, each entity has an interest in creating an authentic path of inclusion.

Hopkins Public Schools, which is well-versed in equity work, was able to contribute in unique ways to this effort. Its students and staff have played key roles in the hosted events, serving as table leaders, speakers, and participants.

“The intent was that, through community conversations, we would inspire others to create change in their organization or provide an individual with the courage to address race and equity issues in the community,” said Katie Williams, director of community education for Hopkins Public Schools.

According to Williams, the $5,000 will be used in the form of mini-grants to support youth and community projects related to social justice and equity work. The HREI was formally recognized at an awards ceremony and reception on December 13 at the Humphrey School.

Contact Katie Williams, Hopkins Public Schools Director of Community Education and Communications at katie.williams@hopkinsschools.org to learn more about this program.
All Burnsville High School students take part in the school’s Career Pathways program.

**Burnsville High School — “Passion, Purpose and Hope: Career Pathways for ALL Students”**

By Kathy Funston, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District Director of Partnerships and Pathways

What sets Burnsville High School apart? All students (2,611) at Burnsville High School participate in College and Career Pathways that prepare them for their futures, provide college credit and/or industry certifications, and enable more than 200 business leaders to partner with teachers and students for relevant learning.

These innovations are possible because Burnsville is reimagining the high school experience. Knowing that students need to have passion, direction, and hope meant that educators needed to address how school looks, feels, and functions, that opportunities are available to all students, and that outcomes are aligned to the community’s job pipeline.

Starting by de-departmentalizing course offerings and creating a system of pathways, courses from every discipline were aligned with the Minnesota Postsecondary Career Fields, Clusters and Pathways to create a seamless trajectory to postsecondary training. Instead of registering for courses and checking off requirements, students select scaffolded, interdepartmental courses within 14 distinct pathways based on their interests, goals, and opportunities for future success. All pathways are offered at school so that no student is denied access or opportunity to a unique, engaging and rewarding high school experience.

These significant changes involved stakeholder voice all along the way and still involve stakeholder voice as the business and civic communities help school staff understand what success looks like. More than 200 businesses work with Pathway programs, and school leaders partner with the Business Education Network, formed with the Burnsville Chamber of Commerce, to extensively collaborate with businesses, community organizations, and governments, to offer unique/relevant career experiences in students’ pathways.

Some of these community-school partnerships include: Firefly Credit Union opened a school-based branch staffed by students; Ebenezer Ridges provides clinical training to our Certified Nursing Assistant students to qualify for the Department of Health Registry; broadcast journalism students learn under the guidance of BCTV staff in the community studio located in Burnsville High School; Walser Automotive Group supports a student-run automotive repair shop that serves district staff; students create apps and repair Chromebooks under the guidance of Google and Best Buy; culinary students earn ServSafe credentials and cater district and community events; and, the Burnsville Fire Department hosts ride-alongs for students enrolled in the newly created Emergency Medical Technician pathway.

Anecdotally, businesses confirm the Pathway model will positively impact their future hiring and retention practices.

In December 2018, Burnsville High School was recognized with a Local Government Innovation Award (LGIA) from the University of Minnesota and Bush Foundation as a school category winner. This is the third consecutive year that a Burnsville-Eagan-Savage (District 191) school or program has received an LGIA.

Additional information: Burnsville High School is a dynamic and innovative suburban public high school serving approximately 2,600 students in grades 9-12. Burnsville High School’s assets include 56 percent of students of color. Burnsville families speak 84 different languages at home, and 15 percent of students receive English Learner services. Just over 51 percent of students qualify for free/reduced meals. Burnsville High School partners with the communities/cities of Burnsville, Eagan and Savage to offer unique and relevant opportunities to all students.

Contact Kathy Funston at kfunston@isd191.org to learn more about this program.
Starting in summer 2015, Marshall County Public Schools began the journey transforming seven acres of our property into The Marshall County Central Schools Outdoor Prairie and Outdoor Classroom. This idea was fostered by our two junior high/high school science teachers, Josh Tharaldson and Katie Melgaard, who envisioned the opportunity. Our science teachers at MCC are remarkable. Josh currently serves as the Minnesota Science Teachers Association President. Katie was Minnesota Secondary Science Teacher of the Year in 2016.

A key component of the project was cooperating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife. We signed a 10-year easement agreement which provided funding for cleanup and site transformation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife provided a dumpster so we could clean up the area. A portion of our students and staff filled the dumpster with some metal and abandoned construction material that had accumulated over the years. Then the city fire department conducted a controlled burn to kill off the vegetation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife hired a brush mower to mow down brush and larger growth. Students planted native prairie grasses and wildflowers in the area. Elementary students, with the help of our high school shop teacher Matt Sundberg, built birdhouses that are along the perimeter. Our high school students also built a couple of bat houses. More than 1,000 milkweed plants were planted in spring 2016 and spring 2017. This has increased the butterfly population dramatically.

The project serves all of our students in preschool through grade 12, although it benefits our grades 3-12 the most due to location. The project has supported collaboration between our elementary teachers and our high school. The Prairie and the classroom are available for elementary classes, high school science classes, and other high school subjects as well. We envision further uses by our outdoor survival class students, art students, English students, and our community education program. Any subject can help connect our students to nature.

Due to strong public support and a committed school board, our district was able to accelerate the timeline for the project. Last school year, a local scholarship foundation and a financial gift from our local grain elevator, facilitated by the Marshall County Education Foundation, along with matching funding from our school district, allowed us to build our outdoor classroom building. Many other donations from the community and grants applied for by Ms. Melgaard and Mr. Tharaldson helped cover the cost of our signage, work boots, trail cams, binoculars, snowshoes, the materials for bird and bat houses, and the benches for public use. Our school district added Wi-Fi access in summer 2018 and bathrooms — which will be operational in spring 2019.

In addition to school use, our groundskeeper mows grass trails through the area to allow public access. Throughout the process, we have included input from the city of Newfolden. Together, the school and the city have hopes of obtaining grant funds for paved walking trails and have left room along the outdoor learning area border to host the trail.

Future improvements include adding a live webcam, an internet-connected weather station, and improving the access road to the classroom building for increased accessibility.

Feel free to view our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/mccrestoredprairie. We encourage any district interested in facilitating a similar project to contact us. We would be glad to share what has led to this successful innovative education program.

Contact Jeffrey Lund at jlund@mccfreeze.org to learn more about this program.
Northfield Public Schools was proud to accept a Local Government Innovation Award from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School for Public Affairs in December 2018. The award validated a nearly 15-year journey resulting in an incredible success story: high-quality health insurance with some predictability regarding premium rates for our employees.

Our work to convert our fully-insured health plan to a self-insured health plan began in 2005, six years prior to making the conversion. For many years we had been a part of an insurance cooperative. Although we had very good claims experience, we saw annual premium increases between 4 percent and 18 percent. These large and mostly unpredictable swings prompted the decision to make a change.

We reactivated our benefits advisory committee, empowering employee groups to work collaboratively with the district on the future of our health insurance program. The committee spent significant time researching Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) vs. Health Savings Account (HSA) options to determine which would be better for our district. We had four health plans in place at the time. The committee eliminated three high-cost plans and implemented a high-deductible health plan with an attached HRA. Offering too many health plans creates adverse selection and weakens all plans. We also educated employees on becoming better consumers with their health plan dollars.

In 2010, we implemented Medicare Supplement plans for retirees over age 65. They received a better plan that is cheaper for both them and the district. It also removed the claims experience for this group from our regular group health plan. The district had already done research on making this move and the teacher union brought it to the bargaining table, creating a win-win situation that was essential when explaining the change to retirees.

We converted to self-funded health insurance in 2011. We had a slight increase in premium for 2012 (2 percent). Our health insurance premiums remained flat until 2018 when we approved a $100 reduction in the overall premium. The $100 reduction was split between the employees and the district, with each spending $50 less per month. Our move to self-funded health insurance allowed the district to retain funding that would have been “left on the table” under our previous cooperative arrangement. The district has accumulated a fund balance of $5,648,700 dedicated to our self-funded health insurance program, more than twice the recommended amount. The judicious management of this fund balance allowed the strategic reduction as outlined above.

In 2013, all employees began receiving the same district contribution toward their health insurance as a result of the collective bargaining process. Prior to this, we had roughly eight different insurance rate tables. This change increased our participation and made our two health plans more viable. All of our employee health insurance premiums are synchronized with the local teacher union’s master agreement. This has greatly streamlined the bargaining process. This change brought good will throughout the system, strengthening a feeling that everyone plays an important role for our students. Salaries still provide the differential for expertise and licensure requirements, but health insurance no longer creates division between employee groups.

This success story offers the potential innovation that can happen when organizations have a clear long-term vision, include input from those impacted most by policy, and seize opportunities when presented. Our health insurance plan has become a strong recruitment and retention tool, ensuring a high-quality staff that is making a difference for our kids and their future.

Contact Molly Viesselman at mviesselman@northfieldschools.org to learn more about this program.
Since 2006, Osseo Area’s Students Connecting through International Service program has been befitting students in Mexico — and the Osseo Area students that participate.

**Osseo Area Schools — “Students Connecting Through International Service”**

*By Tammie Epley, Former Osseo Area School Board Member*

The Students Connecting through International Service program in Osseo Area Schools recently won a Local Government Innovation Award (LGIA) from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

Students Connecting through International Service, led by Tammie Epley, former Osseo Area School Board member, is a six-school program that helps fifth-graders raise money to buy school supplies to deliver the supplies (in the spring) directly to students in Sasabe, Sonora, Mexico.

The Mexican children are required to provide their own school supplies to attend school, and most cannot, so the Osseo students make it possible for the Sasabe students to get an education.

Since the program began in 2006, each group of Osseo Area students have benefitted, too — they’ve learned about another culture, honed their writing and public speaking skills, gained a deeper appreciation for their own schools and communities, and found out first-hand that their individual efforts can make a real difference in the world. After the trip, the students share this knowledge, through video, pictures, and stories, with their schools, communities, and the school board. This program allows the fifth-graders to contribute to the greater global community in a meaningful way.

Elementary school principals Steve Schwartz (Basswood), Aaron Krueger (Edinbrook), Beth Ness (Elm Creek), Ann Mock (Oak View), Scott Taylor (Park Brook) and Margo Kleven (Rice Lake) also play important roles in the program.

Osseo Area’s Students Connecting Through International Service program was one of five statewide winners in the LGIA school category. The LGIA program has been handing out these awards for 12 years, in partnership with the Bush Foundation, the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Association of Townships, and MSBA.

Contact Tammie Epley at tammieepley@gmail.com for more information about this program.
The Mahkato Mdewakanton Association and Mankato Area Public Schools — with support from Minnesota State University, Mankato — co-sponsor an educational program for all sixth-grade students to learn about and experience southern Minnesota's history and heritage. We provide a direct-cultural exchange program in September in conjunction with the Mahkato Wacipi (dance). Representatives from many Native communities gather in Mankato to teach students and teachers about Native culture and history. Since 1987, over 18,000 students from Mankato Area Public Schools and Native American resource people, from many states in the Midwest and Canada, have come to learn and teach about various aspects of Native American culture.

Learning stations are located in seven (corresponding to the seven bands of the Dakota nation) camps on the perimeter of a large circle. Each learning station is staffed with Native American resource persons who teach/demonstrate one aspect of their culture. In total, 650 students attend each year.

The day begins in an “opening circle” ceremony conducted by Dakota leaders. All students and teachers come together to learn about the Dakota way of acknowledging the Great Creator, which includes an Eagle from the Raptor Center.

At the end of the opening ceremony, each class goes to their assigned learning station. There they learn about Native American life. In total, students visit five different learning stations. The learning stations include: storytelling, flute-making, jewelry-making, pottery-making, drum-making, Dakota language, men’s regalia, dance sticks and staffs, women’s regalia and dance, jingle dress-making and dance, tipi living/building, dream-catchers, traditional games, leather-tanning/hides, flintknapping and tool making, and drumming/songs.

The final station brings the students back to the center into a circle group. A Native American drum group and dancers come to the center to teach a circle or “friendship” dance. Everyone joins hands and dances in a circle until they disperse to their buses.

According to the feedback received from students, teachers, parents and resource persons over the last 30 years, this mutually created-shared experience has been meaningful on both a personal as well as professional level for many. There is a stronger sense of community developing between the Native communities and the Mankato community with the implementation of this program, one that seems to be uniting persons in a spirit of respect and appreciation for each other. The collaborative efforts of both communities have created possibilities for new positive shared-histories to develop, histories that will hopefully influence and guide future generations in relationships.

Contact Heather Mueller at hmuell1@isd77.org to learn more about this program.
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The 2019 MSBA All-State School Board is comprised of (clockwise from top left) Julie Domogalla (East Central), Daniel Peterson (Pine City), Jan Solarz (Sauk Rapids-Rice), Robert Sandin (Crosby-Ironton), Frankie Bly (Blue Earth Area), and Robert Moller (New London-Spicer).

Gov. Tim Walz and Minnesota Department of Education Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker shared their vision of the future of public education in the state with MSBA members.

The Badger Concert Band entertained the crowd during Thursday’s Opening Session.
Keynote speaker David Horsager educated attendees on “Leadership and Trust” during the 2019 MSBA Leadership Conference.

Thursday and Friday’s round table sessions were well attended in the Exhibit Hall.

The Barnum Concert Choir performed during Friday’s Closing Session.

Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School Board member Abigail Alt received the first MSBA Rising Star Award during the Leadership Conference.

To see more photos from the Leadership Conference, go to: mnmsba.org/leadershipconference.
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Contact:
Kerry Glader, 763.633.6571
KGlader@plaistedcompanies.com
**MSBA WELCOMES OUR NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**

In January 2019, 404 started their school board service.

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## Director District 1

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<tr>
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## Director District 2

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<tr>
<td>Liz Weisberg</td>
<td>Stillwater Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Burns</td>
<td>Stillwater Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Kuhl</td>
<td>Stillwater Area</td>
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## Director District 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jen Holwegar</td>
<td>Burnsville-Eagan-Savage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leasley Chetner</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Hume</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Kealta</td>
<td>Farmington Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn Gorski</td>
<td>Lakeville Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zach Duckworth</td>
<td>Lakeville Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafe Rodman</td>
<td>Randolph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina Wensmilton</td>
<td>Randolph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Arend</td>
<td>South St. Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Diaz</td>
<td>South St. Paul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Director District 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Josh Pauly</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberly Coprini</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**MSBA Director District Map**

In January 2019, 404 started their school board service.

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**MINNESOTA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION | JOURNAL**

**MARCH-APRIL 2019**

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**AMANDA PETERS - ZUMBROTA-MAZEPPA**

**STEPHANIE MILLER - ZUMBROTA-MAZEPPA**
Congratulations to Minnesota’s newly elected public school board members!

Director District 11
Noel Bailey .................................. Aitkin
Beth Scharz .................................. Barnum
Ann Guenthner .............................. Carlton
Jeremy "Sam" Golley ....................... Cloquet
Cyndi Rice .................................. Cloquet
Jaclyn Conradi Simon .................... Cloquet
Shelly Lappi ................................ Cloquet
Gary Huard .................................. Cook County
Kara Rogers .................................. Cook County
Shayna Korpela ............................. Cromwell/Wright
Thomas Anderson ........................ Cromwell/Wright
Kyle Fosbakk ................................ Deer River
Lloyd Kongsrud ............................. Deer River
Tony Colarich ................................ Elk
Mathew Sorensen ............................ Eveleth/Gilbert
Polly Soncan ................................. Eveleth/Gilbert
Tracy Hanson ................................ Fairbanks
David Marty .................................. Grand Rapids
Gary Knoss .................................. Hermantown
Timothy Peterson ........................... Hermantown
Marge Martin .................................. Hibbing
Sarah Kingsley .............................. Hill City
Jennifer Windels ............................. International Falls
Dean Kori ...................................... Lake Superior
Steven Vaithouse ............................ Lake Superior
Tracy Tiboni ................................. Lake Superior
Trent Wimmer ............................... Lilyfork/Big Falls
Amanda Gross ................................ Mille Lacs/East
Kim Bohnack ................................. Moose lake
Jennifer Tiedeman ......................... Mountain Iron/Buhl
Jesse White .................................. Mountain Iron/Buhl
Jill Hammer .................................. Nashwauk-Keewatin
Janice Connor ............................... Net Lake
Malika Spear .................................. Net Lake
Shane Dratz .................................. Net Lake
Amy Pomnich ............................... Proctor
Lynne Franks ................................. Proctor
Brian Draver ............................... South Koassig-Chisago-Rainy River
Scott Mast .................................... South Koassig-Chisago-Rainy River
Dakota L. Wassenhyck .................. Wrenshall
R. Jack Eudy .................................. Wrenshall

Director District 12
Jonna Engblom ............................. Ada/Kong
Donald Nordlund ......................... Bagley
Jeff Lind ...................................... Bemidji Area
Sarah Yeung .................................. Bemidji Area
Brian Merrill ............................... Blackduck
Jacob Lien .................................. Blackduck
John Neighbors ............................. Climax-Shelly
Vance Thorense ............................ Climax-Shelly
Lindsey King ................................. East Grand Forks
Matt Foss ................................. East Grand Forks
Appli Sverby ............................... Fertile/Bemidhs
Paul Stromsdal ......................... Fertile/Bemidhs
Ryan Opdahl ............................... Fertile/Bemidhs
Josh Kostka ................................. Fisher
Brock Mantei ............................... Fosston
Matt Trojillo ................................. Fosston
Joe Rubiichki ............................... Goodridge
Stacy Anderson ............................ Goodridge
Allison Harder ............................... Greenbush-Middle River
Clinton Brubak ......................... Grygla-Gatzke
Tere Nauray ................................. Grygla-Gatzke
Dan Persons ................................. Kelliher
Amanda Pinnock ............................. Kettleman Central
Robyn Sonstegard .............................................. Lake of the Woods
Bradley Hondstad ......................... Lancaster
Jason Langerud ............................ Lancaster
Justin Peterson .............................. Lancaster
Lacey Lispen ................................. Lancaster
David VanDenEnde ......................... Mahnomen
Kim Anderson ............................. Mahnomen
Kapila Nelson .............................. Marshall County Central
Mindy Dennis ............................... Marshall County Central
Patty Anderson ............................. Marshall County Central
Fayos Anderson ............................. Moorehead Area
Marcus Tyler ............................... Red Lake
Robert McClain ............................. Red Lake
Cheryl Herman .............................. Red Lake
Josiah Hoef ................................. Red Lake Falls
Jebie Heeger ................................. Roseau
Tim Fugleberg ............................. Street-Angle City
Rick Drill ..................................... Street-Angle City
Dann Mather ................................. Thief River Falls
Michelle Westerman ................... Thief River Falls
Ryan Wadsworth ................. Thief River Falls
Jenna Coddington ..................... Tri-County
Rayna Hanson ............................... Tri-County
Jordan Johnson ............................. Wacona-Deer River-Oslo
Niki Peterson ............................... Wacona-Deer River-Oslo
Derek Han ................................. Wabun-Ogema-White Earth
Nick McArthur ............................. Wabun-Ogema-White Earth
Villi Bernius ................................. Wabun-Ogema-White Earth
Bradley Sandor ........................... Win-E-Mac

Director District 13
Jennifer Stone .............................. Eastern Carver County
Leo Gesen .................................. New Prague Area
Mark Bartsek ............................... New Prague Area
Tammy Perso ................................. New Prague Area
Enrique Velazquez .................. Prior Lake-Savage Area
Jonathan Drewes .................. Prior Lake-Savage Area
Michael Nelson .......................... Prior Lake-Savage Area
Joe Aldrich ................................. Shakopee
Kristi Peterson ............................. Shakopee
Paul Christensen ......................... Shakopee
Jacquelyn Johnson ..................... Wacona
Rachael Myers ............................. Wacona
Erika Schulz ................................. Watertown-Mayer
Heidi Gutzkow .......................... Watertown-Mayer
Hunter Faltik ............................... Watertown-Mayer
Mobility in all Minnesota communities (and school districts) continues to increase. Individuals and families have many new opportunities in other communities for their careers and their families. School districts see this daily as new students arrive and need assistance adapting to the new environment. MSBA has seen the impact of mobility in the turnover of elected school board members, and we have seen an increase in questions from members on how to proceed when faced with a school board vacancy.

**QUESTION:** We have a school board member who is moving outside of the school district boundaries because he/she purchased a new house. He/she is moving in April. Can he/she stay on our school board? If not, how do we proceed?

**ANSWER:** To be elected to a school board, the individual must be entitled to vote at any election, be 21 years of age, and have resided in the district for 30 days prior to the election (Article VII, Section 6 of the Minnesota Constitution). Minnesota statute provides additional clarity on the issue when it says in part, “A vacancy in any board occurs when a member … ceases to be a resident of the district, …” (M.S. 123B.09, Subd. 3.)

The vacancy will occur, without any action by the school board member or the school board, the day the school board member changes his/her residence. For clarity, the school board member should submit a letter of resignation with the effective date so the official board minutes can reflect the change. The school board must then comply with the requirements to fill the school board vacancy as found in M.S. 123B.09, Subd. 5b. Some additional facts are needed to determine how to proceed. In this case, the school board had held a school board election the previous November, and the school board member is in the last two years of his/her four-year term.

The statute requires that the vacancy be filled by school board appointment until a special election is held in the current year. The appointment process is not defined in statute, so the school board can determine the best process. The school board can ask for applications and make a selection. Also, they can reach out to a former school board member with experience and ask if the individual would serve. Finally, they could also devise a variation to the previous processes.
Once the appointment is made, a 30-day waiting period is imposed before the appointee is seated. The waiting period is in place to allow the public to petition against the selection of the appointee. Because the vacancy occurred in the third year of the term and more than 90 days prior to General Election Day, the school board must schedule a special election no later than November of the current year. For the majority of school districts that hold their school board elections in the even year, the cost of the special election will be borne by the school district. We have heard that this cost can range from $3,000 to $30,000, depending on the size of the school district.

**QUESTION:** We have a board member who serves in the National Guard and is being deployed overseas for six months. How do we handle this?

**ANSWER:** M.S. 123B.09, Subd. 4, addresses this type of vacancy. For ill or absent members who will not be able to serve and attend meetings for no less than 90 days, the school board may declare a vacancy and fill the vacancy with an appointee until the member can return or until the end of the term, whichever is earliest. Statute does not require a waiting period for this type of appointee, and the appointee is seated immediately following school board action.

The school board has another option for absent school board members who have access to audio and visual technology. The Open Meeting Law (M.S. 13D) addresses the conditions that must occur for school board members to participate remotely. MSBA has seen this work for a deployed school board member who was in a non-secured area. Some military deployments are obviously in conditions where the school board member will not have the freedom or the tools available to participate remotely.

Contact Gary Lee at glee@mnmsba.org.
Jeanna Lilleberg often refers to herself as the “newbie” of the MSBA Board of Directors — but she is anything but inexperienced.

Lilleberg was first seated on the Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City (ACGC) School Board in January 2009. In 2018, Lilleberg was elected to the MSBA Board of Directors — where she represents the southwest Minnesota school board members of MSBA Director District 3.

Lilleberg was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and raised in nearby Springville. “I grew up a farm kid and did all the farm kid-type jobs,” she said.

After graduating from Springville High School, she attended college at Iowa State University — which is also the alma mater of MSBA Executive Director Kirk Schneidawind.

At Iowa State, Lilleberg studied textiles and clothing-related sciences with a minor in industrial engineering. She also served as a senator on the student body government. “I served on the student body for two and half years,” Lilleberg said. “I think that’s probably where I got the grass-roots bug to be involved in education.”

For the past 23-plus years, Lilleberg has worked in the financial services industry. She also has her short-term substitute teacher license, which affords her a great first-hand view of what’s happening in ACGC’s classrooms.

Lilleberg lives on a farm outside Atwater with her husband, Erik, and their four children (Lucas, Nicole, Ethan and Hannah). In her spare
time, Lilleberg volunteers with the Kandiyohi County 4-H Program and the Little Crow Water Ski Team. In the following interview, Lilleberg discusses ACGC’s four-day school week, the importance of communication, and the progress schools can make through grass-roots action.

**MSBA: Why did you decide to run for your local school board?**

**JEANNA LILLEBERG:** I had attended school board meetings for the two years prior to my own election to the board because I felt like there was a lack of communication and transparency (from the school board at that time). This was reminiscent of what I was seeing when I was on the student body government in college.

I thought it was important that the school board take key issues back to their constituents to see how they felt about them.

**MSBA: The ACGC School District is one of the few districts to utilize a four-day school week. What's the story behind that?**

**JL:** It’s kind of funny, during our reorganizational school board meeting in early January we were talking about statutory operating debt. Our district had just gotten out of statutory operating debt a few months before I was first seated on the school board. We were looking for ways to help us avoid going back into statutory operating debt. What are some of the things we can do to cut costs and find new efficiencies? Consequently, the four-day school week became the discussion at that time.

We started our Flexible Learning Year (FLY) in fall 2010. Beforehand, we did a lot of research into four-day school weeks. I made phone calls all over the country to school districts that have been doing four-day weeks — some as early as the 1970s. It was really interesting to have those conversations.

I read a recent article reporting that Colorado now has 99 school districts that operate on a four-day school week. We’re hoping Minnesota’s new administration will allow our district to continue the FLY schedule — because at one point, then-Gov. Mark Dayton said he was not a fan and would not allow it to continue. We are approved through 2020, which will allow my third child to graduate under a FLY. My youngest child has asked, “I’m going to have to go back to five days?” I said, “I don’t know, we’ll see what happens.”

I think one of the things that’s unique about the FLY school week is it offers a lot of opportunities that were unexpected. Our usual school week goes Tuesday through Friday. Our district personnel love having staff development days on the second
Monday of every month. There are elective times for teachers during the month where they can come in and work with their PLCs or work one-on-one with another teacher in a mentoring relationship related to whatever is in their growth plan. That’s been very helpful. The staffs get to choose what they study together. We can also use those Mondays for snow make-up days and parent-teacher conferences.

There are cost-savings, too. Getting out of statutory operating debt was the main reason we originally went this route, but it’s not why we stayed. I don’t think we were the original four-day week school district in Minnesota, but I think we have been on this schedule the longest in the state at this point.

**MSBA:** How can school board members make the biggest impact?

**JL:** There’s that communication piece that goes both ways. It’s taking the ideas from the local community and applying those ideas in the school but then also somebody says, “Well hey, what about this idea in the larger scheme of things?” And that idea could become a grass-roots movement that may be something that ends up on our school board’s legislative agenda or ultimately in a bill — and how could that idea potentially impact education statewide?

I think we need to be cognizant of the fact that, as school board members, we are a link in the communication chain of command. If we are not willing to properly communicate, it just mucks things up. Things run a lot smoother when you’ve got that open communication going both directions.

**MSBA:** What are some of the biggest challenges school boards face?

**JL:** For school boards, one of the big issues is being reactive to the needs of their students while having limited resources — whether that means limited funds or limited teachers.

At our district, we’ve got one particular grade coming up right now that has a larger special education population — and so how do we find enough teachers and the appropriate space for those students?

We’re constantly juggling the limited resources we have available to meet those ever-changing student needs — and even looking farther back on the education spectrum to how do we get interventions in place early on for those students? Can we get them speech therapy early on so it’s easier for them to communicate later? Our district has a preschool through third-grade program called “Boost Up” where we work on physical coordination. Research has shown...
that once those physical connections have been made, those students can move from gross motor skills to fine motor skills and then they can develop further into some of those higher functioning parts of the brain and self-control. Helping students early with those interventions could mean we don’t have to tap into so many of those limited resources. That balancing act is the biggest challenge.

MSBA: What is the most rewarding part of being a school board member?

JL: That I get to go into the school and see the kids and the learning that happens there.

Twice a year, we do observations where we go into the schools to see what’s happening in the classroom. I love seeing those light bulb moments when there’s engagement between the teacher and the student — and the kid gets it.

MSBA: What advice do you have for new school board members?

JL: Ask questions — because I think the hardest thing is “you don’t know what you don’t know.” Until you come to something like the MSBA Leadership Conference and you see some of these other things that are going on in other districts, you don’t know what the possibilities are for your district.

There’s a number of things that I or my fellow board members have seen that made us say, “Hey, what if we ‘ACGC-fied’ this? How could we make this our own?”

We’re constantly looking at new programs. So, when we come to something like the Leadership Conference and see other ideas, we think, “We’re doing something like that, but why isn’t working as well for us? How could we revamp it a bit?” We don’t want to reinvent the wheel, but how can we improve it to make it more effective for us? So, new board members should ask a lot of questions.

MSBA: What do you like best about being on the MSBA Board of Directors?

JL: I get excited about MSBA’s advocacy component. One of the most exciting pieces for me right now is the School Trust Lands swap.

MSBA has been a longtime champion of the School Trust Lands, working relentlessly to ensure the Trust Lands are properly managed by the state. MSBA’s lobbying efforts culminated in the appointment of Aaron Vande Linde as the state’s first School Trust Lands director in May 2016. Vande Linde is responsible for oversight of the more than 3.5 million acres of forest and mineral land rights that generates revenue for Minnesota public school students.
Visit https://mn.gov/school-trust-lands/lands to learn more about the School Trust Lands.

I’ve been on the MSBA Delegate Assembly and have attended enough other MSBA events to see that the School Trust Lands swap is something we’ve been working on for a long time. It’s cool to see that finally coming to fruition. MSBA’s grass-roots action can actually make stuff happen. Also, I like the advocacy approaches that we’re doing right now with special education funding, the elimination of cross-subsidy, and the reduction of mandates. Don’t give us mandates if you’re not going to fund them!

**MSBA: Why is MSBA a valuable organization for school board members?**

**JL:** Prior to being elected to the MSBA Board, I had already been the ACGC School Board’s liaison to MSBA for a long time. I do believe MSBA does great work. MSBA is valuable to board members because you can pretty much find whatever you need to know about board leadership from them. If MSBA staff members don’t know the answer, they know where to go to find it. I think that’s important because when you’re a school board member, you’re trying to run a district and you’re impacting not just one or two students but your community in perpetuity. You are creating the next human resources for your area and that’s an overwhelming assignment if you aren’t equipped. I think MSBA shortens that equipping process and helps new school board members become more effective sooner. MSBA gives us a voice at the Capitol and helps us focus that voice.

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**Contact Jeanna Lilleberg at lillebergj@acgcfalcons.org.**

View the complete MSBA Board of Directors at http://www.mnmsba.org/MSBABoard.

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**Jeanna Lilleberg: Life Outside the Board**

**Family:** Husband, Erik; and four children, Lucas (21), Nicole (19), Ethan (17) and Hannah (14).

**High school:** Springville High School (Springville, Iowa)

**College:** Iowa State University

**Favorite childhood book:** “Tikki Tikki Tembo” by Arlene Mosel

**Favorite music:** “All kinds of music — but 1980s hair bands are the best.”

**Fun fact:** “One summer, I worked as a crop scout for Iowa State University looking at bugs and crop pests. I covered five farmers in five counties and oversaw 5,000 acres.”
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Thanks to a combination of persistence, passion, and partnership, students with special education needs will be positively impacted when two new facilities are completed in 2019 within Minnesota’s Region 5. As part of its strategic reinvestment in the region, Sourcewell has committed $5 million to each of the building projects.

Freshwater Education School District’s Setting IV special education facility in Wadena is estimated to open summer 2019. The new 32,000-square-foot facility will serve approximately 50 students from 13 central Minnesota school districts, plus serve as the central office for Freshwater.

Mid-State Education District’s new Setting IV facility is slated to open September 2019 in Little Falls. The roughly 35,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art building will serve students from Mid-State Education District’s member districts with unique needs requiring a specialized learning environment. Member districts include the Onamia, Pierz, Royalton, Swanville, and Upsala school districts, as well as a facility partnership with the Little Falls Community School.

Minnesota’s Region 5 includes the counties of Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena. For the full story, visit sourcewell.co/groundbreaking.

About Sourcewell
Sourcewell (formerly National Joint Powers Alliance) is a self-supporting government organization, partnering with education, government, and nonprofits to boost student and community success. Created in 1978 as one of Minnesota’s nine service cooperatives, we offer training and shared services to our central Minnesota members. Throughout North America, we offer a cooperative purchasing program with over 300 awarded vendors on contract. Sourcewell is driven by service and the ability to strategically reinvest in member communities.

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If I was a school board member, I would be overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of legal issues that apply to school districts and to elected officials. Even after working with the issues for more than 18 years, I sometimes find myself overwhelmed. In that spirit, I have identified what I think are the top five laws or legal concepts for school board members. These are good places to start with your learning process.

1. The Open Meeting Law. This law is important not only because of the frequency with which school board members will encounter issues covered by this law, but also because it provides for personal liability for board members who violate it. In short, the Open Meeting Law requires a discussion about school board business or school board committee business among a quorum to take place at a properly noticed, open meeting unless an exception applies to require or allow a closed meeting. Discussions via email or text messages do count and create a record of the conversations. MSBA has developed a summary of the exceptions within the law that allow or require a closed meeting.

2. Data Practices. The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act are complicated. What school board members need to know is that only public data can be safely released or discussed in public. MSBA has developed a list of public data for various individuals on whom school districts typically maintain data. This is a situation where knowledge is not power. Instead, knowledge of private data is potential liability. Wrongful release of private data carries the very real possibility for liability — potentially personal liability — and the dollar amount can be very significant.

3. Email. Obviously, this is not a law, but a school board member’s use of email for conducting the duties of his or her elected office requires discipline and restraint or significant problems for the school board member and the school district could result. When email is used for school board work, government data is created. The public can request access to and copies of public data. The government entity can charge for paper copies. The government entity cannot charge for separating public data from private data. A public data request for emails can result in the school district being required to print thousands of pages so that someone can redact (black out private data) the emails. The school district has no ability to recoup those redaction costs.
costs. In addition, if school board members discuss board or board committee issues among themselves via email, they are violating the Open Meeting Law if a quorum of the board or board committee is involved. A record of the violation is created that cannot realistically be deleted. Also, board members may think an email is private because it is sent to one other person. However, if the email is about board work, it is government data and presumed public. School board members could be embarrassed if they make the mistake of communicating about board work thinking it will remain private when, in fact, they were creating public data.

4. Policy. School board members can save themselves time and effort by becoming familiar with their own school district’s policies. They do not have to make a new decision if a policy already covers a question. They can simply follow the existing policy or direct the administration to do so. School board policy needs to be followed by the school board. If policy is out of date with current practice, the policy must be repealed or revised.

5. Ask first, then vote — not the other way around. Decisions of the school board are binding. If a school board member does not have enough information to be comfortable with a decision, he or she should ask for more information before voting. Trying to go back and reverse a bad decision is much more difficult, sometimes impossible, than getting clarity before a vote.

At this point, I would usually say, “contact me with questions,” but by the time this article reaches you, I will be retired from MSBA. I’ll say instead, “contact Terry Morrow with questions.” Terry is the new Director of Legal and Policy Services at MSBA. My prediction is that you will enjoy working with him, because I have. The rest of the MSBA staff are available to you as well, and they are a wonderful group of people. Make use of their knowledge and dedication to help you.

I have also enjoyed working with school board members these last 18-plus years. You are dedicated public servants who want the best for Minnesota’s kids, and you deal with many challenges along the way. Thank you for the example you set.

MSBA thanks Cathy Miller for her 18 years of service to the association! You can contact Terry Morrow (the new Director of Policy and Legal Services) at 800-324-4459 or tmorrow@mnmsba.org.
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Editor’s Note:
Starting in this issue of the Journal, MSBA will look back at its first 100 years – 20 years at a time. January of 2020 will mark the Association’s 100th year in existence. In the following stories, you may be surprised to find out that MSBA was part of the Minnesota Education Association. When the “School Board Division” failed to get a voice on the overall board, it broke away and formed the Minnesota School Boards Association.

This series of articles looks at frontier education, which was little more than a bunch of one-room schoolhouses for grades 1-8 scattered every couple miles in every township. Curriculum was focused on the three R’s – reading, writing and ‘rithmetic.

The teachers were usually young, single women who were horribly underpaid and bound by a list of rules that included not hanging out in “local ice-cream parlors,” which makes me wonder what really went on in ice-cream parlors in the 1880s.

Board members were much more hands-on, required to do things such as to “make sure outhouses were in working condition.”

Boards worked with their local superintendent, who also reported to county superintendents. In an era where getting the crops in was the main priority, attendance and length of the school year was flexible.

Education in the 1920s-40s was always very important to the settlers and did become the “big equalizer” for new immigrants coming into the country. And just as progress was continuing to be made, it didn’t mean that mistakes weren’t made along the way. The opening of boarding schools for Native students set the entire culture back, and the state is still dealing with the ramifications.

Early photos from MSBA’s first 20 years also showed a very white, very male dominance at conventions and business meetings (although in the next edition, the first female board president came along in 1943).

The two world wars also caused problems in trying to run an association, causing lack of teachers, lack of paper, lack of money to fund schools and re-prioritizing what the Association could do to help board members, schools and students.

It was also a heavy burden for MSBA presidents, who were elected, then told to load all the records and materials into their coach or automobile and carry it back to their home in Wheaton or Thief River Falls or wherever they happened to live. Actually, hiring a staff or an executive director wouldn’t come about until 1950.

But this was also a time when there were 7,000 to 8,000 schools, with 48,000 school board members from all walks of life, and MSBA was figuring out what kinds of training those board members needed and what legislation to push to make the job of a public school board member a little easier. In that respect, some things never changed.

If anyone ever wonders what the top priority of Minnesota has been, look back to the actions of the first Territorial Legislature in 1849. Minnesota had just been recognized by the United States as a territory. It’s first territorial Governor, Alexander Ramsey, oversaw the 9-member Council and the 18-member House, who authorized the creation of school districts and a school fund.

“The subject of education, which has ever been esteemed of the first importance,” Gov. Ramsey said, “especially in all new American communities, deserves, and I doubt not will receive, your earliest and most devoted care.”

Even before Minnesota became a state, the people living here knew how important education would be to the country. Common schools were open to all people from age four to 21. Each township was to have a school, and those schools were to be divided into school districts when a township school had more than five families. How did the territory pay for that? Thanks in part to liquor licenses and criminal fines (15 percent of the money was used for territorial schools), and a general tax of 2.5 mills.

Two years later, there were only three schools in the territory, enrolling 250 children. And most schools were only in session for three to six months, teaching reading, writing and mathematics.

BECOMING A STATE: A SCHOOL FOR EVERY TOWNSHIP

Minnesota officially became a state in 1858, and again, one of the first acts of the Legislature was to appoint a state superintendent of public instruction and establish a general and uniform system of public schools.

The first attempt to stipulate that “every township would be a school district” failed. Town supervisors were appointed as school trustees, but the townships were so large at the time that the plan was thrown out after its first year. Instead, the Legislature came back with a “neighborhood plan” where schools would serve families within a couple miles of the school house. And the state established elected school boards to help local administration run local schools, with county supervisors overseeing. The Legislature also in 1862 prohibited school districts from charging tuition. In the next six years, school houses popped up all over Minnesota. By 1868, Gov. William Marshall reported that Minnesota had more school buildings than any other state with comparable population and taxable property.
In the days of early statehood, schools were designed to teach the basics. If your family was rich, there were also a few places students could go for a college education. Basically, schools at that time taught through eighth grade. The Civil War also compounded financial problems and resulted in cutting the state superintendent of instruction, handing it over to the Secretary of State, who reluctantly oversaw the system until 1867 when the state once again appointed a state superintendent.

There had been talk of having schools with higher grades, but it wasn’t until 1872 when Superintendent Horace Wilson formed a committee to look at establishing “the people’s college.” For six years he pushed this idea until the state Legislature enacted a law recognizing a need for a high school program and funded $400 a year to each high school that maintained a minimum course of study. The state formed a High School Board to oversee the schools and a full-time inspector was hired to make sure the schools were doing what was promised.

THE KIEHLE DECADE AND MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

In 1881, David Kiehle was appointed as state superintendent of schools. He held the position for seven terms until stepping down in 1893. He was instrumental in setting up teacher training programs – usually held over the summer. He also brought an effort to recognize that many children were not going to school and started the push for mandatory attendance. In his 1884 report, he drew attention to the problem, that children were not going to school and started programs – usually held over the summer. He served for seven terms until stepping down in 1893. He was the superintendent of schools. He held the position again appointed a state superintendent.

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$1,500 a year if the school met for eight months and supplied transportation for pupils living more than a mile from the building. Five years later, 170 districts had consolidated.

A real solution to the thousands of schools wouldn’t come until years later in 1947, and a final solution was in 1963 when the state mandated that schools consolidate if they did not have a high school. Those two laws decreased schools by 5,800. In 1965, there were 1,742 school districts. Today, in 2019, we now have 333 school districts.

THE HISTORY OF THE MEA

In 1861, just three years after Minnesota became a state, about 100 educators in the Rochester area formed the Minnesota State Teachers Association. In 1876, they changed the name to simply the Minnesota Education Association. In the 1880s, the MEA created a school board member division under the organization. The division met once each year and forwarded their minutes to the MEA board of directors. In 1898, the Grade Teachers Organization formed, eventually becoming the Minnesota Federation of Teachers in 1918. Both the MEA and the MFT merged in 1998 to create Education Minnesota.

Teachers at the turn of the century were mostly single women and a few men. A 1923 Teacher’s Contract had a long list of rules that women had to agree to, or they would be fired, such as:

- Do not get married or keep company with men.
- Do not smoke, drink or “loiter in downtown ice-cream stores.”
- Do not ride in a carriage with any man, except your brother or father.
- Wear two petticoats at all times, do not dye your hair, and do not dress in bright colors.

During the 1917 and 1919 meetings of the MEA, frustration was growing amongst the school board members who saw the teachers pushing for issues that would make overseeing the school board financially more difficult. In 1918, an attorney and school board member from Wheaton, Victor Anderson, pushed to get a school board representative seated on the MEA’s financial and legislative board that made decisions. The request was denied. This was the beginning of the Minnesota School Boards Association. But that history is for another story.

Greg Abbott is the Communications Director for MSBA. This article was compiled from several sources listed on the timeline page. To reach Greg, email gabbott@mnmsba.org

THE STATE LOST TWO OF ITS FIRST STATE SUPERINTENDENTS OF EDUCATION TO THE CIVIL WAR. EDWARD NEILL, THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENT, RESIGNED IN 1861 TO BECOME A CHAPLAIN FOR THE FIRST MINNESOTA REGIMENT. THE SECOND SUPERINTENDENT, B.F. CRARY RESIGNED IN 1862 TO BECOME CHAPLAIN OF THE THIRD MINNESOTA REGIMENT.

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The birth of the Minnesota School Boards Association

Information compiled by Greg Abbott

For 60 years, school board members had been part of the Minnesota Education Association, which was established by a group of superintendents, college professors, principals and classroom teachers back in 1861.

At the time, it was open to anyone who wanted to “elevate the character and advance the interest of the profession of teaching and to promote the cause of popular education in the United States.”

According to MEA’s history book, the dual purposes were always a problem, with “promoting the cause of popular education” coming first, and trying to improve the paltry pay of teachers lagging behind.

By 1917, teachers were beginning to grumble at how their association always seemed to be led by superintendents or non-teachers. Later that year, Florence Rood of St. Paul convened the Grade Teachers Organization and joined the newly formed American Federation of Teachers. St. Paul’s male teachers followed in 1919. Soon after, Minneapolis teachers broke from the MEA and went with AFT.

Troubles with teacher representation that began in 1917 were put on hold when World War I prompted the cancellation of the 1918 MEA convention. But in 1919, with teachers leaving MEA for associations that promised to offer more practical help, the MEA emphasis became more about teacher rights, pay and job security.

This change in philosophy also caused concern for the School Board Division of the MEA. A history written by MSBA’s first association president, Victor Anderson of Wheaton, MN, wrote that friction occurred when it was stated that “the MEA was to be the spokesman for all various divisions which comprised the organization.”

Anderson and a small group of school board members in the division pushed the MEA to let a spokesman from the School Board Division be seated and have a voice on MEA board issues and legislative lobbying. That request was turned down.

Anderson wasn’t a person who took “No” for an answer. He then spent the next year drawing up bylaws to create a new organization for school board members, breaking away from the MEA.

THE MAN BEHIND MSBA

Anderson was born in 1883 in Monson Township and went to school in Wheaton. He was fortunate enough to go to college and was the first graduate of the Northwestern College of Fergus Falls. He then received a law degree in 1906 from the University of Minnesota and joined the local Frank Murphy law firm.

It was during that time that he became involved in the Wheaton School Board in 1914 and also became a member of the MEA’s school board division, being elected to chair the division in 1916. After the division’s request for a voice at the table was turned down in 1920, he and the other people in the delegation agreed to break away.

Anderson returned for the next MEA meeting in 1921 with a complete set of the Articles of Incorporation for the Minnesota School Boards Association. On Nov. 4, 1921, 56 people signed the document, and MSBA became official.

MSBA became the eighth such state school board association in the nation. Its first objective in the Articles of Incorporation was:

“To develop, strengthen and correlate the work of the School Boards in the State of Minnesota in their efforts to promote the general educational interests of the State…”

The second objective was to “deal with all questions affecting the business end of education in whatever manner may be deemed best by the Board of Directors.”

The association members elected Anderson as president, and he served from 1921 until 1924. In 1923, Anderson’s career took off. He resigned from his local law firm to take an appointment as a Minnesota assistant attorney general. He and his wife, Anna, moved to St. Paul, and he served in that state job until 1928, when he was appointed to the office of Attorney General in Washington D.C.

Nine years later, he was named the U.S. District Attorney General of Minnesota in 1937. The next year, he filed for governor of Minnesota, but lost the campaign. He returned to work in Washington and garnered some fame for prosecuting and convicting 18 members of the Socialist Workers Party for sedition in 1941.

He died in September of 1948 at a train depot in Chicago while on his way to Washington D.C. for a convention for U.S. district attorneys.
Fellow attorney “Mr. Johanson” spoke of Anderson after his death: “He had an insatiable desire and urge to be helpful, beyond the call of duty, and rarely was any request made of him that did not call out the best there was in him. He leaves a large position to fill.”

THE ASSOCIATION’S EARLY YEARS

B.K. Savre, of Glenwood, the third MSBA President, wrote a history of the association’s early years, saying: “There is nothing spectacular about the work of the member of a school board. He is generally a rather serious-minded person who goes about his work quietly and quite efficiently. There is criticism at times. That is to be expected.”

In the 1920s, when Savre categorized board members as “he”, it was literally because it was a man’s club. It would take years for women to gradually become part of school boards and took until 1943 until MSBA had its first female president, Mrs. F.N. Christenson (She did actually have a first name, Ursula).

“There is nothing spectacular about the work of the member of a school board. He is generally a rather serious-minded person who goes about his work quietly and quite efficiently. There is criticism at times. That is to be expected.” B.K. Savre

Up until 1950, the President and officers would hold a convention to discuss business items, bring up resolutions and have a speaker on an educational issue. At the end of the convention – sometimes every other year and sometimes every year – a new President and officers would be chosen. All the materials from that year’s convention (and conventions in the past) were loaded into the new President’s carriage or automobile and carried out to Wheaton or Glendale or wherever that year’s president happened to live. There was no “office” or central location for the association. The treasurer for many years, John Palmer, collected the bank registries from the past presidents and “audited” them to make sure finances were in order. An office didn’t materialize until 1950 when the association picked its first executive director.

MSBA’s first “official” convention was March 2-3, 1922 in the House Chamber of the St. Paul Capitol, with 250 members attending. The group immediately set out to form a legislative committee. And for the first few years, one board member’s admission stated: “the work of the legislative committee did not bring results that could be called outstanding.” The Legislature did pass laws in 1923 that helped define the duties of school board members (See insert), right down to “provide proper outhouses for the schools.”

The first legislative victory didn’t come until 1925, when the state voted to allow any school board to become a member of the Minnesota School Boards Association by a two-thirds vote, send one member to the convention and to pay the dues from school district funds. By the next year, 250 school districts had joined the organization, with attendance so big that the editor of the American School Board Journal wrote: “I have attended school board association conventions for the past 30 years and am prepared to say that this is the largest convention of its kind that I have ever attended.”

If MSBA could be called anything in its early years, it would be the Association of “No.” Many resolutions were passed in opposition to teacher tenure laws. More resolutions were passed to oppose a minimum wage for teachers. Eventually, resolutions branched out to helping make the Teachers Retirement Fund workable and pushing for high schools (then called Junior Colleges).

The break from MEA wasn’t bitter. In fact, an MEA Relations Committee was appointed by the association. This committee met with a similar MEA committee where many different discussions took place. Disagreements on teacher pay was only a minor reason for the split. In 1925, the Association invited superintendents to the convention and the relationship with MSBA took off. “In the strictest sense [the superintendent] is our co-worker, the School Board’s right-hand man in all matters affecting the business of school administration.”

Two years later, with strong relationships among superintendents and the state department of education officials, divisions popped up about MEA holding teacher conventions during the school year, instead of the summer and how many used the convention as simply “a time for shopping.” The MEA Relations Committee held many discussions with the MEA urging that the School Boards Association should come back into the MEA fold. But in 1927, when MSBA had a resolution sent to members to withhold permission for teachers to attend the MEA sessions, talk of reuniting with MEA came to a quick end.

When the MEA Relations Committee reported in 1929 on the difficulty of rescheduling the conferences, the report was accepted.
MSBA COMES INTO ITS OWN

Colson was a big believer that – just as teachers had used their association to push for training – the Minnesota School Boards Association should also push for educating school board members on finances, hiring and the importance of selecting curriculum.

It took until 1950, when the Legislature agreed, approving a law that said members shall have training in finances and management through the Minnesota School Boards Association. The first workshop for new school board members was held during that 1950 convention.

Up until 1950, Colson made sure there were discussions at the yearly meetings about best practices of school finance and other management issues.

Colson was also known for sponsoring “open forums” at convention meetings that “became rather spirited at times.” The Association template continued to have “open forums” at convention meetings about the Minnesota School Boards Association. The first workshop for new school board members was held during that 1950 convention.

Will this assembly PLEASE come to order!

In the early years, MSBA presidents found it tough to start meetings on time with 250 people talking in a hotel ballroom. Even with a gavel and a bell, it was hard to wrangle the attention and quiet the crowd.

MSBA’s third president, B.K. Savre, tried to draw attention by loudly singing “The More We Get Together.” He noticed one strong female voice coming from the back of the room. It was that of Mrs. J. M. Hardy of Mahnomen. The next year, she was invited to come forward and lead a strong-voiced choir of men in song to start the meeting.

In 1927, she was elected song leader and music director. The sessions from then on were opened with singing by Mrs. Hardy, followed by a sing-a-long with the entire assembly. At times, she started solo. Other times, she sang folk songs in Norwegian. But the fact is: She could get conventioneers on their feet to sing along, “bringing out a feeling of comradeship.”

Once she left, this tradition – still in effect today – prompted MSBA to bring in high school choirs and bands to kick off the convention sessions.

Saved by the income tax

Since an education system started in Minnesota, it was paid for by a state education fund drawn from property taxes across the state.

But along came the Great Depression in 1931. Farms and homesteads fell into delinquency in paying property taxes. Foreclosures skyrocketed, and the money coming into the state plummeted.

With dwindling money to fund schools, MSBA passed resolutions to decrease teacher pay to keep school doors open. The MEA was quick to counter that salaries of teachers – especially male teachers – was little more than what an uneducated laborer made. Other resolutions cut back on the minimum number of months school had to be in session, which also affected teacher pay.

Claims of overzealous state Department of Education inspectors also arose. When the so-called “snoops” found that school years were shortened, they reported back to state authorities to cut off aid to those schools, causing some schools to close down and lay off teachers.

Taxes on mining fell off. Income from lower property values was threatening to severely cut any type of aid to schools. But in 1933, the Minnesota Legislature approved the state’s first income tax. By taxing wealth, instead of property, and directing a good share of it toward funding schools, many children were able to continue their education.

Proceeds were distributed to school districts based on the number of children in the district age 8 to 16. As the finances of the nation gradually improved, the portion of income tax for schools was limited in 1937 to $10 per child.
American Indian boarding schools, which operated in Minnesota and across the United States beginning in the late nineteenth century, represent a dark chapter in U.S. history. Also called industrial schools, these institutions prepared boys for manual labor and farming and girls for domestic work. The boarding school, whether on or off a reservation, carried out the government’s mission to restructure Indians’ minds and personalities by severing children’s physical, cultural, and spiritual connections to their tribes.

On March 3, 1891, Congress authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to create legal rules that required Indian children to attend boarding schools. It also authorized the Indian Office to withhold rations, clothing, and other annuities from Indian parents or guardians who would not send and keep their children in school. Indian Agents forcibly abducted children as young as four from their homes and enrolled them in Christian- and government-run boarding schools beginning in the mid-1800s and continuing into the 1970s.

Captain Richard H. Pratt’s boarding school experiment began in the late nineteenth century. A staunch nineteenth-century assimilationist, Pratt advocated a position that diverged slightly from the white majority’s. Convinced of the U.S. government’s duty to “Americanize” Indians, he offered a variation of the slogan—popular in the American West—that stated the only good Indian was a dead one. The proper goal, Pratt claimed, was to “kill the Indian...and save the man.”

Pratt founded a school in 1879 at the site of an unused cavalry barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, organizing the institution along rigid military lines. Pratt’s program of half days in school, and industrial work, which were followed by supper, up to thirty minutes of recreation, a call to quarters, and “tattoo.” Pupils retired to the sounds of taps at 9 p.m.

A typical daily schedule began with an early wake-up call at 5:45 am, most often announced by a bugler or bells. Students marched from one activity to the next. Every minute of the day was scheduled; mornings began with making beds, brushing teeth, breakfast, and industrial call (“detail”). School began around 9 am. Afternoons were spent in school and industrial work, which were followed by supper, up to thirty minutes of recreation, and “tattoo.” Pupils retired to the sounds of taps at 9 p.m.

Methods of discipline at Minnesota boarding schools were harsh. Some schools had cells or dungeons where students were confined for days and given only bread and water. One forced a young boy to dress like a girl for a month as a punishment; another cut a rebellious girl’s hair as short as a boy’s. Minnesota boarding schools recorded epidemics of measles, influenza, blood poisoning, diphtheria, typhoid, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, pneumonia, trachoma, and mumps, which swept through overcrowded dormitories. Students also died from accidents such as drowning and falls.

Boarding school staff assigned students to “details”: working in the kitchen, barns, and gardens; washing dishes, tables, and floors; ironing; sewing; darning; and carpentry. The schools also extensively utilized an “outing” program that retained students for the summer and involuntarily leased them out to white homes as menial laborers.

One of Minnesota’s most famous boarding school survivors is American Indian activist Dennis Banks. When he was only four years old, Banks was sent 300 miles from his home on the Leech Lake Reservation of Ojibwe, in Cass County, to the Pipestone Indian School. Lonesome, he kept running away but was caught and severely beaten each time. Another student, at St. Benedict’s, recalled being punished by being made to chew lye soap and blow bubbles that burned the inside of her mouth. This was a common punishment for students if they spoke their tribal language.

Many students’ parents and relatives resisted the boarding school system. In letters sent to absent children, they delivered news from home and tried to maintain family ties. In messages sent to school administrators, they arranged visits, advocated for improved living conditions, and reported cases of malnourishment and illness.

In 1928, the U.S. government released the Meriam Report, an evaluation of conditions on American Indian reservations and in boarding schools. The critical study called the schools grossly inadequate. It presented evidence of malnourishment, overcrowding, insufficient medical services, a reliance on student labor, and low standards for teachers. As a result, the government built day schools on reservations. The original boarding schools began closing their doors as parents increasingly kept their children at home. By the end of the 1970s, most of them had shut down. In 2016, though tribes and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) continue to run 50 schools nationwide, no Indian boarding schools remain open in Minnesota.

There has been scant recognition of the boarding school era by the U.S federal government and church denominations that initiated and carried out the schools’ policies. Neither has acknowledged, as the Canadian government did for its own boarding school program in 2008, that those policies’ purpose was cultural genocide or accepted responsibility for their effects. Pratt’s contemporaries viewed him and other enforcers of assimilationist policies as heroes.

Few textbooks discussed Indian boarding schools before the twenty-first century. In the 2000s, however, many historians study them as the tools of ethnic cleansing. The genocidal policies the schools’ staffs carried out aimed to destroy the essential foundations of the lives of American Indian students. Their objective was the disintegration and destruction of the culture, language, and spirituality of the American Indian kids under their care. The policies they implemented led to the deaths of thousands of students through disease, hunger, and malnutrition, and have left a legacy of intergenerational trauma and unresolved griefing in many boarding school survivors and their families across Indian country.

Dr. Denise Lajimodiere was an assistant professor at the North Dakota State University School of Education. Her article was initially posted on the Minnpost site and published in Minnpost.com in 2016.
Boarding schools stripped Native students of their language, culture
But recent initiatives are small steps to bringing Native culture back to students

By Greg Abbott

Victoria White’s grandmother never did talk to her about the experience of being sent away to a boarding school. The memories were always too harsh and fearful to bring up.

White, a board member from the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley school district, said that the damage done by boarding schools robbed Native children of their culture, their language and their entire way of life.

Only recently, she said, are schools with Native populations trying to reinstate native languages into their curriculum and even talk about history from a Native American perspective.

For decades, Native history was never taught. And if it was, it had a definite “white” perspective. “When I was growing up, my teacher told me the only reason Indians weren’t turned into slaves was because they were lazy.”

As a child, she was not made to feel welcome in her own school. She was not encouraged to keep her own identity. “As a kid, I didn’t speak in her own school. She was not encouraged to put Native history, language and culture back into public schools.”

By stripping Native Americans of their culture, the effects are seen in myriad ways. “We need to re-teach our people on the ways of parenting in a Native tribe, our rituals, not what was stripped from us in boarding schools.”

White is urging the Department of Education, MSBA and all education groups to form a work group of Native educators who can find ways to put Native history, language and culture back into public schools.

“We need to feel welcome. Students need teachers who look like them and understand their culture,” she said. “That’s a big first step.”

Cass Lake-Bena Superintendent Rochelle Johnson said the state has taken two huge steps in the past few years. The biggest one is tribal consultation: Any school within 50 miles of a reservation needs to consult with tribes on curriculum.

“It’s still in its infancy, but we’re trying to find a way to bridge work among tribes and schools and have conversations,” Johnson said.

The second important move forward is the federal Indian Education Success for the Future grant changes that turned it from a competitive grant into a formula grant so schools now have money for books or cultural events. She’s seen districts go from receiving nothing or $60,000 to receiving $400,000 so a school can successfully implement a program.

She said more can be done with federal initiatives to do language revitalization, citing the success of a program at Red Lake schools. “If I can find a speaker, I can try it,” she said. “Boarding schools wiped out our language, and we’re still dealing with ramifications of that era.”

Johnson also likes the idea of Native instructors developing curriculum to share statewide – having it evaluated by elders to validate the curriculum, and then making it available to all school districts.

As one of two female Native superintendents in the state, Johnson said she is always trying to build pathways to rebuild Native history, language and culture and give Native students a better sense of who they are and who they can become.

Greg Abbott is MSBA’s communications director. To reach him about this article, you can contact him at gabbott@mnsmsba.org.

Sources: Information for these articles were compiled from “A Little Bit of Heaven in St. Peter” by Robert Wettergren; MEA: “The Birth of an Organization” by Mame Osteen; Education Minnesota; “A History of the Minnesota School Boards Association” by B.K. Savre; “A History of the State Department of Education in Minnesota”; “Wheaton Centennial: A History of Wheaton”; “Memorial proceedings of the 16th Judicial District”; “The Wheaton Idea” by Victor Anderson; “Minnesota School Finance History”; and “A History of the Beginnings of MSBA” by Victor Anderson. MSBA would also like to thank the University of Minnesota Wilson Library and the Wheaton Gazette for their help in finding resources, as well as Dr. Denise K. Lajimodiere.

MSBA’s Mission Statement – Then and Now:

1921:
“To develop, strengthen and correlate the work of the School Boards in the State of Minnesota in their efforts to promote the general educational interests of the State…”

2019:
“The Minnesota School Boards Association, a leading advocate for public education, supports, promotes, and strengthens the work of public school boards.”

Segregated schools in Minnesota’s frontier days

While Minnesota was considered a progressive state and had laws against discrimination, many African Americans experienced discrimination in housing, employment, and education, but they challenged discriminatory practices by filing court actions and creating organizations to fight for civil rights.

In 1865, St. Paul segregated its public schools by opening a “School for Colored Children.” The St. Paul schools were the only education system in Minnesota that was segregated.

In response to community and political pressure, the state Legislature passed a law in 1869 banning school segregation in St. Paul.
For every future rock star.