A Trauma-Sensitive Approach for the Highest-Needs Students

The MSBA Interview — David Law, the 2020 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year
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Dave Bahr
507-354-0858 (cell)
dbahr@hillercommercial.com

Max Bahr
507-319-2322 (cell)
mbahr@hillercommercial.com
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3................Presidential Primary — No meetings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
10..............Township Election Day — If applicable, no meetings or activities from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
22.............MSBA Board of Directors’ Meeting
23.............MSBA Day at the Capitol
29–30........The Trust Edge Workshop — Bemidji

APRIL 2020
9.............Officers’ Workshop — Burnsville
14............Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop — St. Peter
15............Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop — St. Peter
20.............MSBA Insurance Trust Meeting
23............Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop — Staples
24............Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV Workshop — Staples

MAY 2020
14–15........MSBA Board of Directors Meeting
20.............Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus Meeting
25.............Memorial Day — No meetings

MSBA thanks Glencoe-Silver Lake Public Schools art teacher Shanda Landes and her students for sharing their art in this issue.
Shanda was named the Art Educators of Minnesota (AEM) High School Art Educator of the Year for the 2019-2020 school year.

COVER ART:
Yvette M.

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.
Equity has been on the minds of many people in the past month. Early February found MSBA Executive Director Kirk Schneidawind, MSBA Director of Government Relations Denise Dittrich and the MSBA Board Executive Committee attending the Equity Seminar and Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C. We were able to meet with the offices of all our Minnesota legislators, many with the legislator in person. The messages that were brought to them, and heard loudly and clearly, we believe, included the fully funding of IDEA, teacher shortage, school choice, school safety, broadband, and the School Trust Lands.

We had the opportunity to share personal stories from many of the districts across the state who are struggling due to these issues. We were able to share the statistics from the Minnesota Student Survey showing staggering numbers of students vaping and suffering with mental health and depression issues. There is bipartisan work going on across the aisle on these issues, but we need to keep our legislators motivated to continue advocating for these concerns that affect us all. As board members and administrators, it is important for our congressmen to hear from their constituents on issues affecting their schools.

Another equity issue to keep your eyes on is the proposed Constitutional Amendment, which would change the current education clause in our Minnesota Constitution. In an effort to close the achievement gap, this amendment is the passion of former Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page and Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President Neal Kashkari. Recently, MSBA’s Terry Morrow, Kirk Schneidawind, and I attended a meeting with the executive directors and chairs of some other education associations, such as MREA, SEE, MASA, and AMSD. It was a listening and sharing session with Page and Kashkari. The intent of the proposal is to guarantee a quality education for all children. Vigorous discussions have been stimulated across the state, including the education folks, policymakers, Chamber of Commerce, and other concerned citizens.

We acknowledge that the achievement gap is unacceptable and needs to be fixed. I believe that there is a lot of good work and initiatives taking place in our districts and that we need to do a better job of sharing best practices and successes. We need to model those districts that are seeing success in closing the gap.

This gap problem needs to encompass more than “education.” As we look at the statistics of students who are struggling to achieve at grade level, we learn that many times these are the students who have obstacles beyond the classroom that effect their ability to learn. These challenges for these students include affordable housing, food insecurity, lack of stability and good role-modeling in their home life, proper health care resources, and English language barriers to name a few. I believe that the “education gap” cannot fall completely on our public school system. It needs to be a systemic approach encompassing education, housing, family support services, health services, and more.

As Executive Director Schneidawind so appropriately stated in our meeting with Page and Kashkari, “Words matter.” We need to be cautious about the unintended consequences and outcomes of each and every word in a proposed amendment. We need to scrutinize what the impact of each word could really cause. Kashkari and Page are holding listening sessions across the state. As discussion on this amendment continues, please attend a session near you and be informed. Let’s work together to close the gap and continue to serve all 850,000 students in our charge.

Contact MSBA President Deborah Pauly at dpauly@isd717.org.
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Intermediate Direct 287 serves the top 1% of highest-needs students in the west metro. Many of its students have significant disabilities, unmet mental health needs, and have experienced severe childhood trauma. In Minnesota, almost twice as many black children (58%) experience trauma compared to their white peers (31%). Children of color are disproportionately impacted by trauma, including race-related trauma, and educators are in a key position to better understand the intersection of race and trauma and help students gain skills needed to heal and succeed.

The shift in student needs led Superintendent Sandy Lewandowski to launch a new direction for District 287, a focus on trauma-sensitive practices. The district works to change the narrative from “What’s wrong with that child?” to “What happened to that child?”

District 287 is on a journey to become Minnesota’s first trauma-sensitive and healing-centered school district. Some of the more significant district initiatives include a partnership with Dr. Bruce Perry’s ChildTrauma Academy; the launch of therapeutic teaching classrooms in partnership with the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation; a district mobile response team that responds to hundreds of crises each year; and a focus on employee safety and wellbeing, in view of the district averaging 325 staff injuries annually due to student behavior, including nearly 40 head concussions last school year.

A Trauma-Sensitive Approach for the Highest-Needs Students

Intermediate District 287 replaces school resource officers with student safety coaches

By Rachel Hicks, Intermediate District 287 Director of Communications and Public Relations
As part of the focus on trauma responsiveness, District 287 made a controversial decision in 2017 to replace school resource officers with a new role, student safety coaches. The student safety coaches focus on building meaningful relationships with students, taking the “temperature” of students and of the building as a whole, proactively addressing issues and behavior, and using restorative practices to help students re-engage after an incident. Most importantly, the coaches support students through challenging behavior before it escalates to needing police intervention.

Educators know that one of the ways students with unique needs communicate is through behavior. The brains of students who have experienced trauma have been impacted in ways that can cause aggressive behavior, which is most often a response to trauma experienced earlier in life. The behavior they display is a result of their trauma and/or disabilities and is not willful behavior; it is an outcome of their disability.

The student safety coaches are district employees who have years of experience working in Federal Setting IV Emotional Behavior Disorder and mental health settings, and receive specialized training in mental health recognition, de-escalation tactics, Crisis Intervention Team Training, defensive tactics, crime prevention, school safety, security, and A.L.I.C.E.

The model, which focuses on de-escalating students before their behaviors rise to a higher level of concern, matches the district’s philosophy of moving away from the tendency to criminalize mental illness. Under this new model, there are fewer arrests and citations and a reduction in restrictive procedures and staff injuries. As of the 2018-2019 school year, the student safety coaches were able to successfully resolve 95% of all student crises without the need for police intervention.

A model like this isn’t for every school district. As a specialized school district dedicated to serving some of Minnesota’s highest-needs students, District 287 believes that the traditional school resource officer model was not the best avenue for providing services to a unique student population; namely, students with disabilities and unmet mental health needs. Yet, as educators, all must grow in their understanding of the intersection of race, trauma, student behavior, disabilities, and special education and re-calibrate so that schools can meet the needs of today’s students.

Have questions about student safety coaches? Direct your inquiries to Intermediate District 287 at info@district287.org.
The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) annually honors its top superintendent for “demonstrating leadership for learning, communication skills, professionalism, and community involvement.”

For the 2020 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year award, MASA selected Anoka-Hennepin Superintendent David Law.

During his tenure at Anoka-Hennepin, Law has developed and implemented a unique continuous improvement plan that includes measures for preschool students, elementary, middle and high school math and reading proficiency measures, measures for academic growth, attendance, student discipline, and graduation. The scorecard also includes measures for participation in postsecondary coursework, participation in co-curricular activities, student engagement, staff engagement, parent satisfaction, and employee evaluation. Law’s effective efforts on this continuous improvement plan have resulted in frequent local and national presentations.

“The work David is doing within his district and community has elevated him to become a leader across the state,” said MASA Executive Director Gary Amoroso. “David is the embodiment of this award and we

The MSBA Interview — David Law, the 2020 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year

Law: My award is “a reflection of the 7,000 employees doing great things for kids.”

By Bruce Lombard, MSBA Associate Director of Communications

Yvette M.
Anoka-Hennepin Superintendent David Law was acknowledged for being named the 2020 MASA Minnesota Superintendent of the Year during the MSBA Leadership Conference Recognition Luncheon in January 2020 in Minneapolis. Law was joined at the event by four members of his school board team: (from left to right) Vice-Chair Nicole Hayes, Chair Marci Anderson, Clerk Jeff Simon, and Treasurer Bill Harvey.

are very proud to have him represent our administrators as Minnesota’s Superintendent of the Year.”

Under Law’s leadership, Anoka-Hennepin successfully passed a $249 million bond referendum — at the time of its approval, the largest referendum in state history — creating safe and secure learning environments and allowing school construction in areas of growing student population. The referendum also provided solutions for maintaining quality schools by improving science labs, media centers, and flexible learning areas throughout the district and addressed class sizes at all levels.

An important aspect of continuous improvement and student achievement has been a partnership, between Anoka-Hennepin and the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, to conduct an Equity Context Analysis Process (ECAP) to create an Equity Achievement Plan. With Law’s guidance, the ECAP provided an in-depth study of systemic variables contributing to equity in the school district.

Earlier in his education career, Law taught at Coon Rapids High School, worked as a dean of students in Mounds View Public Schools, and served as a middle school principal and an assistant superintendent at White Bear Lake Area Schools, before becoming Anoka-Hennepin’s superintendent in 2014.

In the following interview, Law details the strategies his district employs to address the achievement gap, touts the importance of a positive school climate, and lists his proudest accomplishments at Anoka-Hennepin.

**MSBA:** Congratulations on being named the Minnesota Association of School Administrators’ 2020 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year! What does this prestigious honor mean to you personally?

**DAVID LAW:** This is an extremely special recognition for me. It’s just an incredible honor. It’s humbling when so many people appreciate the work you do and also take the time to nominate you for something like this. But this is a recognition of the great staff in our district. This is a reflection of the 7,000 employees doing great things for kids. So, I’m hoping to use this to showcase the great work happening all over our system and to bring attention to the great work happening across the state of Minnesota.

**MSBA:** What can a superintendent/school board team do to close achievement gaps to make sure all students succeed? What strategies have worked? What would you like to try?

**DAVID LAW:** Anoka-Hennepin’s mission is to effectively educate all students for success. That effort is shared...
in all the work that we do each and every day. Our district is data-driven, planful, and committed. We use our student data, along with staff, student and community input to prioritize our efforts and ensure we’re getting results.

Because of this prioritization and implementation, Anoka-Hennepin high schools have made significant reductions in the gaps in graduation rates between white students and students of color. Our district also has some of the smallest gaps between student proficiency outcomes compared to similar districts.

Because we’re not satisfied with any gaps in student outcome, our school board recently approved an Equity Achievement Plan aimed at increasing the academic achievement for all students, while reducing and eliminating predictable and persistent achievement gaps between student groups. Climate, student engagement, and curriculum are all pieces of this plan. This is a crucial step in keeping both staff, students, and parents accountable in this effort.

Moving forward, I want to continue to build relationships with our staff, students, and parents as this makes all the difference in a student’s success at school.

**MSBA:** What are some of the harder challenges for running one of the largest school districts in the state? How have you worked to make a large district be on the same page and move in the same direction as your strategic plan?

**DAVID LAW:** Making sure staff are not only informed of our district’s strategic priorities, but that they are aware of their role in achieving them. The last couple of years, I’ve hosted a districtwide back-to-school event to share our strategic priorities. Staff gather at each of our five high schools to hear the message simultaneously. To do this, I present at one school and have that same presentation broadcast to the remaining four schools. An inspiring speaker usually joins me. Last year it was Kat Perkins, finalist on NBC’s “The Voice.” A lot of staff members share with me how much they appreciate this.

As I’m a big proponent of establishing a positive climate, I get up the nerve each school year to try and create a viral-worthy back-to-school video. From bus karaoke to role-playing district jobs, each year it seems more and more staff, students, and community members look forward to my next episode. Doing this, I hope staff feel that even though we have challenging work, it’s important to do our best and have fun doing it.

Each winter we survey our employees to determine their level of engagement and awareness of our key work. We’re proud to have almost 90 percent of our employees report high engagement. We’re also pleased that almost 70 percent of our employees report that they understand our planning process and our priorities.

Inspiration, communication, and follow-through are three ways to ensure a large system stays focused on the most important work.

**MSBA:** What are some of your biggest achievements in your school district during your time as superintendent?

**DAVID LAW:** I’m most proud of our student success, our parent satisfaction,
and our community support to ensure we can continue to provide the best for our students.

Anoka-Hennepin is one of a handful of districts in the state that has shown seven years of improvement in student reading proficiency. Over the past few years, our student performance in math, reading, and science assessments has steadily outpaced the state averages in these areas. For the 2019 assessments, Anoka-Hennepin was metro leading in the number and percentage of schools that were considered “beating the odds” based on student demographics and performance on standardized assessments. Finally, our 2018 graduation rates were the highest in over two decades, with several high schools nearly eliminating gaps in rates between student groups. I’m very proud of the hard work of our staff and the student success that follows.

Each year we survey our parents about their satisfaction with our schools. Our parents routinely share that our schools are safe, our staff care about their children, and their children are well prepared for success beyond high school. While there is room for improvement, we’re proud to meet the expectations of our parents.

Finally, I’m incredibly proud of the reputation we’re earning in our community and for the support they have provided. Every summer we survey our community at large about our school system. The percentage of community members that consider us an “excellent” school district has risen from just over 20 percent in 2013 to 33 percent this past summer. We strive to be an excellent school district for all students. In addition, we recently asked our community to invest $250 million in our schools to be “Fit for the Future” and to provide another $9 million per year to support the operations of new sites and address class size. We were thrilled to have a strong majority support for both of these requests. We have a supportive community that holds us in high regard.

**MSBA:** What will be the biggest challenges for your school district in the next five years?

**DAVID LAW:** We’re at an interesting time in Minnesota public education. Our parents and community employers are wanting us to provide employable, hard-working, creative, collaborative students who have the ability to learn on the job in a fast-changing environment. Our state guidelines force us to teach in a rigid system, created several decades ago, measuring all students as if they planned to attend a four-year college. Our students want an individualized program that allows them the flexibility to explore a variety of opportunities. We need to reimagine what public education could be with a stronger focus on the talents our students bring and less emphasis on liberal arts college preparation for all students, regardless if they want it.

Visit https://www.ahschools.us/domain/501 to learn more about Superintendent Law and Anoka-Hennepin Schools.

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**Ebony S.**
Wayzata Public Schools Wins Top Honors for Innovation and Creativity

Local Government Innovation Awards singles out five schools

Through its Local Government Innovation Awards (LGIA) program, the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs recognizes the creative ways school districts and other local governments are finding to deliver services with greater impact and at lower cost.

“The astounding fact about innovation is that it comes from what we know,” says Jay Kiedrowski, senior fellow at the Humphrey School and LGIA program lead. “Creating something innovative only takes place when there’s a pause to consider what we know, and set aside current beliefs to explore another better path or process. These awards are a reflection of that. They represent innovative ways to do the things that local government traditionally does, but in new models with new efficiencies and collaborations.”

For 2019, Wayzata High School was named the “Leading Innovator” in the LGIA overall school category winner for “The Hub” Web-Based Teacher Portal. Wayzata High School will receive a $5,000 grant from the Bush Foundation to continue local government innovation and redesign. See Page 17 to learn about Wayzata’s award-winning initiative.

The other 2019 LGIA-award winning schools include Bemidji Area Schools, Northfield Public Schools, Roseville Area Schools, and Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools. Learn about their innovative school programs on Pages 18-21.

The 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.
Leading School Innovator: Wayzata High School — “The Hub” Web-Based Teacher Portal

By Tyler Shepard, Wayzata High School Associate Principal

The “WHS Hub” was developed by Tyler Shepard, Wayzata High School Associate Principal, and Sheri Berggren, programmer for Student Support Time (https://studentsupporttime.com), for Wayzata High School staff and students, to help communicate, manage, and collaborate on student intervention time, teachers’ school-to-home communication, teacher/student academic referrals, academic resource center scheduling, after-school programming, college/university visits, teacher before/after school availability, digital hall passes, and student volunteer projects. The interface is a user-friendly, student-focused environment that provides teachers with the tools to collaborate on their students.

The innovative WHS Hub provides real-time data in an efficient and collaborative nature, allowing teachers to share their efforts to develop stronger, more meaningful, and purposeful interventions for students. “The Hub” ensures accountability on behalf of teachers. Parents/Guardians have a better understanding of the interventions being utilized, their student’s attendance, and their student’s teacher’s availability. Problem-solving teams can dig deep into student needs to develop programming with the student’s best interest in mind. Furthermore, this application allows us to manage more than 3,500 students during intervention time and reduces hundreds of hours of secretarial/managerial paperwork. The overall goal is to ultimately improve the educational experience for our students. The WHS Hub is constantly evolving based on the feedback that we receive from students, parents, guardians, and staff.

“The Hub” contains a conflict management tool, which allows us to go in each week to navigate teacher/student requests and prevent conflicts during our intervention times. Feedback on this tool has been incredibly positive. We are at a point where students and teachers do not know how we operated without it! We took some risks along the way, especially the up-front development and implementation phases, but in the end, I am very proud of our final (though, constantly improving) product!

“The Hub” has made a significant difference in the Wayzata High School community due to the many different “utilities” we have developed within the system; for example, implementing digital hall passes to allow our students to stay in classes longer, reduce secretarial paperwork, and provide transparency to all stakeholders. Our teachers can now collaborate on their “school-to-home” efforts in partnership with student support teams. Students have the opportunity to sign up for colleges and universities that visit, along with “seminar” extension opportunities provided during our “MyTime” (intervention period).

Overall, “The Hub” has made a difference by highlighting the data: more than 1,000 students are “requested” for “MyTime” (intervention time) each week, hundreds of digital hall passes are sent out each day, students and teachers have access to book time in the academic resource center, hundreds of hours of “school-to-home” communication is now done in collaboration between teachers and support staff, and parents/guardians are significantly more informed. The list goes on ...

In the beginning phases of exploring our “MyTime” implementation, other applications were explored; we chose to develop our own, called “The Hub,” and we are very excited to share how amazing it has become, continues to be, and our ongoing development on making it even better — always with the students’ best interest in mind. We will continue to innovate within the application to develop an endless amount of tools for our “customers”!

Contact Tyler Shepard (Tyler.Shepard@wayzataschools.org) or Sheri Berggren (sheri@level8creative.com) to learn more about “The Hub” program.
Website: https://www.wayzataschools.org

Visit https://youtu.be/fOS6t3o_Kg4 to view a video highlighting Wayzata Public Schools’ award-winning program.
The Bemidji Career Academies provide our Bemidji High School students in grades 9-12 opportunities to explore careers while in high school. We launched our first six academies in fall 2017. We have grown quickly, adding 12 more academies for a total of 18 career pathways with more than 600 students registered for at least one academy.

The goal of the academies is to equip students with the skills necessary to obtain high-skilled employment while staying in the community. Rather than sending students out of the community to attend college — perhaps never to return — the Bemidji Career Academies seek to partner with local businesses, agencies, and schools so that students can find an opportunity to earn a vocational certificate or diploma without leaving Bemidji. Through community collaboration and intentional coursework design, Bemidji Career Academies allow students the opportunity to thrive in today’s workforce while staying in Bemidji and becoming productive income earners contributing to the economy of the Bemidji area.

The uniqueness of the Bemidji Career Academies lies in the tremendous numbers of collaborating businesses and agencies that support our 18 career academies. More than 50 businesses, plus Bemidji State University and Northwest Technical College, are partners in educating and providing internships for students in the Bemidji Career Academies.

Bemidji Career Academy students are given the opportunity to assess their skills and talents as they pertain to the world of work, build skills transferable to the workplace by taking courses specific to their chosen Career Academy, access free college courses while in high school, and have the opportunity to participate with community businesses who provide invaluable “real world” workplace experience.

The purpose of the program is to “grow our own” within the Bemidji Schools and the community of Bemidji. Our goal is to equip students in high school with opportunities for career exploration, aptitude development, job shadowing and internship prospects, plus opportunities to earn dual credit at college and technical school levels. Through the Career Academies, students are paired with businesses and agencies in order to develop skills, test their aptitudes and interests, and, in the process, become vetted by potential future employers.

In addition to career exploration and preparation, an on-campus work seminar course at the high school provides foundational knowledge and work-readiness skills with a goal of developing critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. The course also teaches the “employee skills or life skills” necessary for students to become skilled at interview techniques, as well as helping them develop 21st century collaboration skills. Aptitude and personality analyses are incorporated, along with safety, responsibility, resume, and interview preparation.

Bemidji offers highly skilled tech jobs with few qualified applicants to fill positions. The Bemidji Career Academies are a bridge between education and business/industry leaders. Each career academy has a workplace learning experience offering simulation and curriculum alignment that involves real-world exposure for students, from job shadowing and industry tours to apprenticeships and internships leading to full-time employment.

This collaboration between the Bemidji Career Academies and our Greater Bemidji business and industry partners is a win-win for all stakeholders involved, as graduation rates increase and employers find qualified workers.

Contact Brian Stefanich at brian_stefanich@isd31.net to learn more about Bemidji Career Academies.

Website:
http://www.bemidjicareeracademies.com
Northfield Public Schools received an award from the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs for its involvement in the Northfield Healthy Community Initiative’s (HCI) Youth on Boards program. The Humphrey School recognized the efforts of 17 local government entities for its Local Government Innovation Awards (LGIA), and we were recognized for our achievements in the school category.

In Northfield, we strongly believe in creating spaces for youth to have their voices heard and to be actively engaged in civic life. Youth on Boards has been an extremely successful program for this and can be replicated in other communities.

Youth on Boards allows Northfield students to get involved in local government, the school district, and nonprofit organizations by serving on boards and commissions. The program helps civic leaders become more informed of youth perspectives and priorities. Students who participate in the program gain exposure to meaningful careers in local government and gain skills that will serve them as they move into secondary education and beyond. The Youth on Boards program currently has 86 youth involved in 31 boards, commissions, or community leadership teams in the Northfield community. The Youth on Boards initiative is funded by a public-private partnership between Youthprise, the City of Northfield, and Northfield HCI.

Through the school district, Northfield students are engaged participants in numerous advisory committees. Student representatives have seats on the school district’s policy, finance, curriculum, staff development/technology, wellness, facilities, and equity advisory committees. The District Youth Council (DYC) provides 16 high school students a chance to research, analyze, and give input on issues important to them within the school district. A board member and I attend most DYC meetings. DYC students rotate as observers at school board meetings. Student feedback facilitated by the DYC was a significant contributing factor to the district’s decision to slow discussion about modifying our school start times. Their input was also a vital ingredient in continuing to lease iPads (as opposed to changing to Chromebooks) and adding the Logitech Crayon stylus for every student. These are just two examples of how we have elevated student voice beyond mere appearance and used it in real decision-making.

Meleah Follen, Northfield HCI coordinator for the Youth on Boards program, has been a consistent champion for student voice. “The best part of the program is youth in Northfield, more so than other cities, have an innate belief that their voice matters and confidence that it will be heard,” Follen said. “I believe this is a result of the Youth on Boards program’s scope, size, and that youth voice is represented throughout the city. I feel youth voice has become a dominant thread in the fabric of our community, and it is expected that they will have the opportunity to weigh-in on important decisions.”

Contact Matt Hillmann at mhillmann@northfieldschools.org to learn more about Youth on Boards.

Website: https://northfieldschools.org
The University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs has recognized Roseville Area Schools with a Local Government Innovation Award (LGIA) for our work with Hamline University on English Learner in the Mainstream (ELM) Coaching. The awards bring attention to the innovative ways that local governments in Minnesota have responded to rising costs, reduced revenues, and increasing demand for public services.

Roseville’s ELM coaching program addresses the critical need for general education teachers to receive professional development on evidence-based academic language instructional practices, and it does so in a sustainable and affordable way. The program started in 2017 and four ELM coaches have been added every year to allow for an ELM coach in every building. ELM coaches are teachers licensed in English as a second language who receive language training resources and coaching professional development from Hamline University.

“Our district English learner program has 1,150 students identified with 30 different languages,” said Kristina Robertson, EL program administrator. “They will accelerate their language and content proficiency if they receive language instruction and supports in the general education settings as well as their English language development services. General education teachers have not had the opportunity to learn about language instructional strategies in the teacher preparation programs, and this model allows for job-embedded professional development with ongoing support to help them with implementing new learning.”

The program creates the opportunity for deeper discussion on language and instruction between teachers and coaches.

“Classroom teachers are doing this work enthusiastically, asking more questions and seeking guidance on language specific questions that they didn’t know to ask previously. It’s opened up a dialogue that didn’t exist before,” said Angela Froemming, an ELM coach at Edgerton Elementary.

ELM coaches in 2019-2020 include Angela Froemming and Marisa Knoss at Edgerton Elementary; Sarah Holty at Falcon Heights Elementary; Heidi Wheelock at Parkview Center School; Amber Erickson and Bridget Gagnelius at Brimhall Elementary; Kelsey Turnbull at Roseville Area High School; Carmen Sieleni and Kelly Grucelski at Roseville Area Middle School; Sophie Snell at Harambee Elementary; and Shelley Hoehn at Central Park Elementary.

Contact Kristina Robertson at kristina.robertson@isd623.org to learn more about the English Learner in the Mainstream (ELM) Coaching program.

Website: https://www.isd623.org
Statistics show that since the tornado in 2010, the city of Wadena has not had a newly built house for sale on the market. Quality homes are quickly snapped up by buyers and there is a known need for affordable housing options. In 2019, Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools, the Wadena Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), and the Wadena Development Authority (WDA) teamed up to address these needs.

The project would become the “Community House of 2020” where all three entities are working together to get a house sold this spring and fill an empty lot left vacant from that tornado 10 years ago. The house was built by the students of Wadena-Deer Creek, led by teacher Mike Shrode. When the students finished building the house in spring 2019, the school put the house up for sale. After many tours and conversations with perspective buyers who were looking to buy the house and move it, there still was no contract in place for a sale.

Having the home still for sale as the school year came to a close, a conversation was started between Wadena-Deer Creek School Board Member Ryan Damlo — who also sits on the Wadena HRA Board — and Maria Marthaler, the executive director of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Marthaler loved the idea of bringing a new home to a lot in Wadena and went to work with the WDA’s Dean Uselman to figure out a possible solution. A lot was found in southwest Wadena where empty lots still remain from the tornado, and all three entities found this to be a great location. A lot was secured, the house moved, and soon the rest of the work began.

Bids were put out to local contractors explaining the project and the concept of the “Community House.” A basement would need to be dug, block laid, water, sewer, gas, and electric all brought to the house. Heating and cooling needed to be added, along with a two-stall garage, and more would all have to be a part, including many laborers and contractors.

The day before the basement was dug, Damlo, Marthaler, and Uselman met with the contractors to explain the project and goal. With no general contractor to help keep costs low, everyone would have to communicate with each other to make this a beautiful and affordable new house in southwest Wadena. As the meeting wrapped up, one contractor mentioned how important this project was to him and his business. He said that if we don’t keep classes like this in Wadena, these skills and potential hires will start to fade away, and that was the reason he was so excited about being a part of this “Community House.” He said keeping the trades a priority was the reason for his involvement.

The house is now in the finishing stages and soon will have a for sale sign up. Great partnerships, collaboration, and innovation have led to the “Community House of 2020” becoming a reality with dreams of more to come.

Contact Ryan Damlo at rdamlo@wdc2155.k12.mn.us to learn more about the Community House 2020 program.

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Above: Former MSBA President Marge Kinney and former MSBA Executive Directors Bob Meeks (center) and Mike Torkleson (right) were among the dignitaries on hand to celebrate MSBA’s centennial.

Below: Members of the Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial School Board took advantage of a photo opportunity next to letters manufactured by students from Bertha-Hewitt and Perham-Dent school districts.

Opening Session keynote speaker John Quiñones shared his inspirational story about how education made a difference in his life.

Above: The Minneapolis Southwest High School Classical Guitar Orchestra kicked off the Opening Session of the 2020 Leadership Conference with a strong performance.

Left: MSBA Deputy Executive Director — and maestro extraordinaire — Gary Lee got the membership on its feet to sing an ice-breaking tune.
Robbinsdale Area Superintendent Carlton Jenkins and Minneapolis Public School Board Member Kim Ellison received the 2020 Lighthouse Award during the School Board Members of Color Meeting.

School board members Julie Peterson (Moose Lake, left) and Aimee Struffert (Milaca) both earned the Arlene Bush Board Member of Distinction Award for surpassing 1,000 career MSBA training points.

MSBA Insurance Trust representatives were among the more than 200 vendors featured in the Exhibit Hall.
MSBA hosted a Centennial Reception during the conference to celebrate our association’s 100th birthday.

Sauk Rapids-Rice School Board Member Ryan Butkowski (left) was presented with the MSBA Rising Star award by Brian Rodning. The Rising Star Award honors an outstanding school board member during their first term of service. Brian is the spouse of late MSBA staff member Tiffany Rodning, who is the inspiration for the award.

Left: The 2020 All-State School Board was announced during the Recognition Luncheon. This year’s All-State School Board is comprised of (from left to right) Tom Peltier (Grand Rapids), Stacey Ruelle (Prior Lake-Savage Area), Ann Long Voelkner (Bemidji Area), Stephen Schnieder (Worthington), Colleen Deutsch (Luverne) and Wally Connaker (Pine City).

Thursday and Friday Round Table sessions were again a popular draw during the conference.

Visit MSBA’s YouTube page at [https://www.youtube.com/mnmsbavideo](https://www.youtube.com/mnmsbavideo) to view Governor Tim Walz’s Leadership Conference address, and to watch musical performances by the Minneapolis Southwest High School Classical Guitar Orchestra and the Grand Rapids High School Jazz Band.
Minnesota Governor Tim Walz shared his vision for public education during the Closing Session.

The Grand Rapids High School Jazz Band opened the Closing Session with some great tunes.

Above: MSBA President Deborah Pauly introduced Crosby-Ironton School Board Member Michael Domin as MSBA's President-Elect.

Below: Nevis Public Schools’ robotics team was one of 17 impressive student programs featured at the School Excellence Showcase.

Closing Session keynote speaker Alan November discussed “Technology and the Future of Education.”
Our Vision for Education:
Quality teachers will be just as crucial in the future
Technology will become even more prominent; closing achievement gap is key to Minnesota’s economic future

By Kirk Schneidawind, MSBA Executive Director

“"The Jetsons." Boomers and tail-end Gen Xers understand. A futuristic cartoon created in 1962 whose setting was a futuristic space-age kind of thing set in the year 2062. Orbit City was the model city for the future. George flew to work in his aero-car each day while Jane, Judy, Elroy, and the robot maid, Rosie, did what typical family members do — go to school, go to work, clean the house and take the dog for a walk. While the structure was like that of today’s families, they had the futuristic comforts of technological advantages that made daily life appear utopic and certainly easier than a daily routine of a Minnesotan on a snowy day in January. Albeit a cartoon, it made this youngster give some serious thought to what may be in my future: driving an aero-car to work, a robot completing my daily chores, and everything else done with a simple push of button. Perhaps a
bit idealistic; nevertheless, that cartoon did make one dream of a life of ease through technology. Will our schools in 2040 or 2060 look like Orbit City High, where students fly aboard an aero-bus to a building that may or may not resemble a school building of today?

As we look forward to what our public education system looks like in the year 2040, we know that one of the key underpinnings of a strong nation is a strong system of public schools. While the question is not about hitting a reset button on our public education system, a fundamental question to ask is, “Do we envision our educational system in 2040 will look and feel like it does today?” In other words, if you could drop Minnesota’s 2020 educational system down in the year 2040, would you? Is there enough good in our current system and structure that our future students and parents would accept this? I would guess that most students and parents would say there are some things they would keep and some things would be better left in 2020. The one thing that I have learned in my years in public education is that our people who teach, administer, or school board are never satisfied with the status quo. From the elementary teacher who strives to improve math and reading proficiency by a measurable percentage, to the high school principal who aspires for a 100 percent graduation rate, to the school board and superintendent vision of a 21st century future-ready learning environment, they are unselfishly driven to do better for their students, community, and state. The inertia that comes with the “never-satisfied” mindset will not by itself create a world-class public education system in 2040; however, it does help drive and sustain change.

The heart and soul of a solid educational system is teaching

Hands down. We know the most influential variable on a student is a teacher who not only is gifted in the art and science of teaching but also makes a student feel valued each day. The importance of high-quality teaching needs to be a non-negotiable, foundational element for any school and classroom structure of the future. If there is one piece that must be maintained in our schools, it is this symbiotic relationship between teachers and their students. The model of a traditional school building that we know today may not look exactly the same in 2040, but I foresee a teacher/leader still very much an important part of our educational delivery system.

Whether you look back 20 years or fast forward 20 years, some of the foundational outcomes for our high school graduates will not change. Our employers and higher education institutions want graduates who can read, think critically, communicate (orally and by the written word), collaborate, show tech proficiency, and have a solid work ethic. If these skills for our graduates continue to
be important, and I anticipate they will, our curriculum directors and administrators will be much more focused on the development of these skills.

The introduction and growth of postsecondary enrollment opportunities will continue to grow. To this point, I see greater and more robust partnerships developing between high schools and postsecondary institutions. It’s a relationship that already exists, but I foresee one that will be more seamless and collaborative. Our students, families, and employers will demand it. An additional element — that will improve an already burgeoning sector of the education market — will be the continued and growing engagement of private industry in this higher education/K-12 partnership. We have seen the growth of the academy model, career and tech programs, where the blending of public and private partnerships has resulted in more real-world, authentic learning for our students. The trifecta of a higher education, high schools, and private industry have developed instructional models that now allow our students to apply the skills they learn in biology and ag science courses in agricultural-based academies that blend theory with practice. We have also seen this in the health care and industrial technology sectors. This model of authentic and real-world learning is not only beneficial for the student but also helps our higher education institutions and private industry. I see this model continuing to grow and expand as we transition from an information age model that is more centered on building a career- and college-ready graduate.

**Technology will continue to be important**

As no surprise, I anticipate the use of technology will continue to be a very important element in everything our schools do, from daily operations to the delivery of instruction. “The Jetsons” proved this, right? The most recognizable difference will be the way in which our teachers deliver instruction. As we know, technology has already bent the arc in terms of how instruction is delivered. Online offerings and virtual schools that did not exist or were just in their infancy 20 years ago are now a part of the educational landscape. A terrific example of the transformational power of how online learning continues to evolve and create tension for our traditional institutions is what has happened in the higher education space. Fifteen years ago, Arizona State University was a traditional higher education institution. Nearly all students arrived on campus to attend their required classes to earn their college degree. Today, Arizona State University is a global higher education institution where online students earn the same degree on-campus students receive. In 2012, Arizona State University’s total enrollment (all campuses) was 73,400 students. In 2018, that number is 111,000, primarily due to the expansion of their intentional efforts to
build a worldwide, online university. Just as the invention of the airplane had shrunk the world, technology has made our world smaller and eliminated district boundaries as we know them today. I don’t see online learning opportunities as the only path, but our school districts will need to be proactive in future planning. Let’s think about this. Today’s students are our digital natives 2.0. Their parents grew up with the first generation of smartphones, and this device has become an essential element of nearly every family member in every household. From the comfort of our home, car, or seat in the airport, one can access information about nearly any topic of interest through their device. This also means that lessons that have traditionally been delivered within the walls of our public school buildings can be easily be shared with students over an electronic format. This model of delivery will continue to grow and expand as technological advancements make it a more seamless and productive experience for students and staff. However, we must be mindful that access, or lack thereof, does not increase or stretch the opportunity gap for our students.

Achievement gap must be addressed

The biggest and most important issue that will need continued attention is our collective effort to close the achievement gap. The economic future of Minnesota depends upon it. Our state demographer has been very clear in her projections regarding the future population trends in our state. Minnesota’s population will continue to grow more diverse and at a steady pace, with our regional centers, suburban cities, and urban areas showing the largest increases through 2035. The efforts by our public and private sectors will need to be reinforced because of the economic and societal good that will result. Investments and instructional strategies will need to be sharpened. Earlier learning opportunities need greater consideration. Most importantly, our school boards and school districts need leaders in their communities to help solve this problem.

At the end of the day and as we think forward, which we ask our school boards to do as they set the vision for their districts, we must always keep the ends in mind. From a school district perspective, what do we want our high school graduates to know and be able to do? School boards will continue to play a key role in the governance of our school districts. There is nothing more fundamental or important than having a community engaged in decision-making as it relates to the education of their students and the vision for their schools.

Because we work in the public school space, we understand the value and importance of our public schools. However, not everyone sees the important role and value of public schools in our communities and state. Even in 2040, our teachers, administrators, and board members must be diligent and persistent in their efforts to ensure our policymakers understand this as well. For the last two decades, we have seen how less-than-inflationary funding and persistent and stubborn special education cross-subsidy have reduced the buying power of our school districts, which, in turn, affect student learning opportunities. No matter what the structure of our buildings looks like or how education is delivered, investment in our schools and our students is a foundational and stabilizing element that must keep the train moving forward. With all of the outside pressures that include efforts to give the money to parents in the form of a voucher or starve our public schools into operating more efficiently, we must be loud and persistent in our continued advocacy in the role that our schools play and the importance of providing an equitable and world class education for ALL of our students. I am hopeful our state’s leaders will make the funding of our public schools their top priority.

Want to read more?

MSBA’s Greg Abbott writes about two paths education funding could take. One path follows what usually happens — we all want the best for all students but don’t want to pay for it. The other path takes foresight and courage by the Legislature and a governor to create a second Minnesota Miracle that fully funds special education, ELL programs, counseling, quality teachers, and the ability for schools to offer advanced learning.

MSBA’s Paula O’Loughlin writes about what equity could look like in 2040 for schools. This aspirational declaration includes the mastery of the ABCs of educational equity: Access, Belonging, and Courage.

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MSBA is pleased to announce the latest addition to our staff — Shelby Herrera. Herrera joined MSBA on December 9, 2019, as an Administrative Assistant to Strategic Governance and the MSBA Insurance Trust (MSBAIIT).

Herrera grew up on a farm south of Currie, Minnesota, and attended Tracy Area High School. After high school graduation, she earned an Associate of Liberal Arts degree from Worthington Community College.

Transferring to Minnesota State University, Mankato, Shelby completed her Bachelor’s degree — majoring in Biology with a minor in Business — and then continued her education in Exercise Science. During her two years of graduate work, she taught anatomy labs — which sparked her interest in a teaching career.

After college, working as an elementary paraprofessional solidified Shelby’s interest in education and she pursued her teaching license. Knowing Mankato was where Shelby and her husband, Leroy, wanted to set roots, she pursued a teaching career with Mankato Area Public Schools.

Shelby taught middle school science for 14 years at Mankato East Junior High/Prairie Winds Middle School within Mankato Area Public Schools. During that time, she obtained her Master of Arts in Teaching.

“As a lifelong learner, education is my passion,” Herrera said. “I am thrilled to be a part of the MSBA team.”

Herrera resides in Eagle Lake with her husband and loves spending time with her family and friends.
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QUESTION: What is the Poverty Simulation Experience?

ANSWER: Nearly 60 school board members from 29 school districts attended the Poverty Simulation Experience, one of two Early Bird Sessions offered during the 2020 MSBA Leadership Conference.

The Poverty Simulation Experience was created by the Missouri Community Action Network as an interactive, immersive experience that sensitizes participants to the realities of poverty. The Poverty Simulation is not a game. The simulation is based on actual individuals and their real-life experiences and was designed to help participants to promote poverty awareness, increase understanding, inspire local change, and transform perspectives.

In the simulation, participants experienced a “month” of poverty by taking on the identity of someone living with few financial resources and then handing real-life challenges that arise during an ordinary month. Participants assumed the roles of 20 different “families.” Each family had to provide the basic necessities and shelter during the course of four 15-minute segments, each segment representing one week. The simulation was conducted in a large room with the families seated in groups in the center of the room. Around the perimeter were tables representing community resources and services for the families. Volunteers were recruited to staff the resource tables which included a bank, super center, community action agency, employer, utility company, pawn shop, grocery, social service agency, faith-based agency, payday and title loan lender, mortgage company, school, community health center, and child care center. Volunteers also assumed the roles of law enforcement.

Whitney Miller-Nichols — the Assistant Director of Leadership Development of the Alabama Association of School Boards — facilitated the simulation as well as the large group debrief after the simulation.

“I am in awe by the passion Minnesota school board members have for serving the students in their districts,” Miller-Nichols said. “Ensuring equity for all students in your district is hard work, and an important first step in that process is building empathy for students and their families. I hope participants left the conference inspired to dig into that hard work with their governance team.”

Frazee-Vergas School Board Member Daneele Shipman said, “The simulation was very eye-opening with pertinent and realistic information. Every district should do this!”

Other feedback included: “Please offer this again!” “We want our board members who were not able to attend to be able to do so.” “This was the best thing I have attended.”

Please visit https://www.povertysimulation.net to learn more about the Poverty Simulation.

Contact Paula O’Loughlin at poloughlin@mnmsba.org.

Reflections on the Poverty Simulation Experience

By Paula O’Loughlin, MSBA Associate Director of Board Development
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EAPC Architects Engineers
(Sean Sugden)
539 Bielenberg Drive, Ste 115
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St. Cloud, MN 56303
320-252-3740, Fax 320-255-0683
www.glarchitects.com
spaasch@glarchitects.com

Hallberg Engineering, Inc.
(Richard Lucio)
1750 Commerce Court
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651-748-1100, Fax 651-748-9370
www.hallbergengineering.com
info@hallbergengineering.com

ICS Consulting, Inc.
(Pat Overom)
3890 Pheasant Ridge Drive NE, Suite 180
Blaine, MN 55449
763-354-2670, Fax 763-780-2866
www.ics-consult.com
pato@ics-consult.com

InGensa, Inc.
(Jacqueline Coleman)
18215 45th Avenue N, Suite C
Plymouth, MN 55446
952-222-3551, Fax 952-222-9980
www.ingensainc.com
jcoleman@ingensainc.com

JLG Architects
(Dan Miller)
322 1st Avenue N, Suite 600
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612-746-4260
www.jlgarchitects.com
marketing@jlgarchitects.com

Larson Engineering, Inc.
(Matt Woodruff)
3524 Labore Road
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651-481-9120, Fax 651-481-9201
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mwoodruff@larsonengr.com

Lawal Scott Erickson Architects, Inc.
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100 Portland Ave South, Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612-333-1010
www.lse-architects.com
jtuttle@lse-architects.com

MLA Architects
(Mark Lenz)
12 Long Lake Road, Suite 17
St. Paul, MN 55115
651-770-4442, Fax 651-770-1997
www.architectsmla.com
mark@architectsmla.com

Nexus Solutions
(Michael David)
6885 Sycamore Lane North
Maple Grove, MN 55369
612-747-1003, Fax 763-201-8410
mdavid@nexusolutions.com
www.nexusolutions.com

SiteLogIQ
(Ellen Schmidt)
2125 2nd Street
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
888-514-1971, Fax 952-487-9389
www.sitelogiq.com
ellen.schmidt@sitelogiq.com

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(Jim Wilson)
401 2nd Avenue North, Suite 206
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612-332-1401
www.wendelcompanies.com
jwilson@wendelcompanies.com

Widseth Smith Notting
(Kevin Donnay)
7804 Industrial Park Road
Baxter, MN 56425
218-829-5117, Fax 218-829-2517
www.widsethsmithnotting.com
kevin.donnay@wsn.us.com

Wold Architects and Engineers
(Vaughn Dierks)
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(Rod Schumacher)
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Mankato, MN 56001
507-387-6651
www.is-grp.com
rod.schumacher@is-grp.com

ATTEMES

Kennedy & Graven, Chartered
(Maggie R. Wallner)
200 South Sixth Street, Suite 470
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-337-9300, Fax 612-337-9310
www.kennedy-graven.com
contactus@kennedy-graven.com

Knuston, Flynn & Deans
(Thomas S. Deans)
1155 Centre Pointe Drive, Suite 10
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-222-2811, Fax 651-225-0600
www.kfdmn.com
tdeans@kfdmn.com

Pemberton Law Firm
(Michael T. Rengel)
110 N Mill Street
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
218-736-5493, Fax 218-736-3950
www.pemlaw.com
m.rengel@pemlaw.com

Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, P.A.
(Ann R. Goering)
730 2nd Ave S., Ste. 300
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-339-0060, Fax 612-339-0038
www.ratwiklaw.com
info@ratwiklaw.com

Rupp, Anderson, Squires & Waldspurger, P.A.
(Ann Thorne)
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School board committees raise some of the more challenging questions regarding Minnesota’s Open Meeting Law. On the surface, the law appears to be relatively clear: “all meetings, including executive sessions, must be open to the public … of any committee [and] subcommittee … of a public body” (M.S. 13D.01).

It is evident that the Open Meeting Law applies when a quorum of the school board gathers to consider school district business. At the same time, uncertainty exists about when the Open Meeting Law applies to a committee. Some experts claim that only committees with decision-making authority are covered by the Open Meeting Law. Others contend that all committees that the school board creates and on which one or more school board members participate are covered.

A requirement that a committee have the power to make decisions would limit the Open Meeting Law’s scope. A 1988 Minnesota Court of Appeals decision — Minnesota Daily v. University of Minnesota — determined that the Open Meeting Law did not cover the Presidential Search Advisory Committee established by the university’s regents. The regents did not select the committee members and no regents served on the committee, which helped screen applicants and offered advice to the regents. The court held that this committee was not subject to the Open Meeting Law.

The Minnesota Daily court emphasized a 1983 ruling that stated that the Open Meeting Law, “by expressly including meetings of committees and subcommittees, gives fair warning that the deliberations of governing bodies are included within its proscription.” The Minnesota Daily court then quoted a 1982 case that stated, “it is the power to decide, as opposed to the right to recommend, that determines whether one is a member of a governing body.” These observations have led to a conclusion that not all committees are bound by the Open Meeting Law.

Other decisions, however, lead to a broader interpretation of the Open Meeting Law that includes all committees that are board-created and include at least one board member. In 1983, the Minnesota Supreme Court defined “meetings” subject to the Open Meeting Law to include “a quorum of a committee … at which members discuss, decide, or receive information as a group on issues relating to the official business of that governing body” (Moberg v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 281). The Moberg court did not limit the Open Meeting Law’s application to committees with the power to decide.

MSBA’s Model Policy 213 — School Board Committees — takes a conservative approach that leans in favor of the Moberg ruling. The policy states that a committee or subcommittee “is advisory in nature and has only such authority as specified by the school board. The school board will receive reports or recommendations from a committee or subcommittee for consideration.” Under this policy, the board reserves the right to make all final decisions.

While the MSBA model policy retains decision-making authority in the board, it carefully adopts a view that favors transparency and accountability. Model Policy 213 states, “[A]ll meetings of committees or subcommittees shall be open to the public in compliance with the Open Meeting Law, and notice shall be given as prescribed by law.” This position is in keeping with the Minnesota Supreme Court’s admonition that open meeting laws “should be construed most favorably to the public.”

School districts are encouraged to consult with their legal counsel for guidance on whether a specific committee must comply with Minnesota’s Open Meeting Law.

Contact Terry Morrow at tmorrow@mnmsba.org.
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