No experience necessary for the Delegate Assembly
Two Minnesota school districts earn Magna Awards
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The MSBA Interview with Mary Cathryn Ricker
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

8 | NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY FOR THE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
New London-Spicer School Board member Lucinda Dahlberg recalls her first time as a delegate

20 | THE MSBA INTERVIEW — EDUCATION COMMISSIONER MARY CATHRYN RICKER
“School board members are valuable partners” in closing achievement gap
Bruce Lombard

12 | TWO MINNESOTA SCHOOL DISTRICTS EARN MAGNA AWARDS
Roseville Area, St. Paul honored for equity work

24 | NEW RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS
CAREI providing absenteeism review along with briefs on class sizes, homework, literacy and more
Kim Gibbons

27 | MEET MSBA’S NEW STAFF MEMBER — JAYMYSON SILLMAN

16 | WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED, AND WE ARE LISTENING
Management Services Survey will help MSBA better serve its membership
Amy Fullenkamp-Taylor

28 | MSBA BOARD DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT: LUCY PAYNE

40 | MSBA: YEARS 1940–1960

8 | STRAIGHT TALK Kirk Schneidawind, MSBA Executive Director

26 | ASK MSBA Greg Abbott, MSBA Director of Communications

32 | VENDOR DIRECTORY Pierre Productions & Promotions, Inc.

36 | LEGAL UPDATE Terry Morrow, MSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services
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CALENDAR

MAY 2019
8–10........MASBO Annual Conference
16–17........MSBA Board of Directors Annual Meeting
22 ............Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus Meeting
27 ............Memorial Day (no meetings)

JULY 2019
4............Independence Day (no meetings)

AUGUST 2019
4............MSBA Board of Directors Meeting
4............MSBA Summer Seminar Early Bird Session (Brooklyn Park)
5............MSBA Summer Seminar (Brooklyn Park)
5............MSBA Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I Workshop (Brooklyn Park)
6............MSBA Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II Workshop (Brooklyn Park)
6............MSBA Charter School Board Workshop (Brooklyn Park)
7............MDE/MASA Conference
13 ............Primary Election Day (no meetings or activities 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.)
15 ............Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus Meeting

MSBA thanks arts instructor Kandice Mascotti and her students from Stewartville Public Schools for sharing their art in this issue.

COVER ART:
Ali G.

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 with any healthy organization, taking time to reflect and celebrate accomplishments is an important part of affirming the work that we do for Minnesota’s public school boards. MSBA will be celebrating its 100th birthday during our Leadership Conference in January 2020. Consider this as our invitation to you to get this party prep underway.

Like other associations, we believe that MSBA thrives for several reasons, but one of the biggest is our insatiable appetite to deliver value to our members. As a mission-driven association, our daily and long-term focus is about delivering services that provide value to our school boards. The No. 1 reason members join an association is because they believe that the association will help solve a problem. Proudly, we can say that MSBA has been helping our school boards solve their problems through policy development, advocacy, and training over the last 100 years. We believe these problem-solving endeavors contribute to better outcomes for the school board, the school district and, most importantly, the students.

A really important element of our recognition and celebration is to hear from you, our members. We want to hear and share your stories about the positive impact that the staff at MSBA has had on you as a board member or your school board. It would be easy for us to “toot our own horn” regarding the number of issues that we have either resolved or preemptively nipped, but we believe the stories are more authentic and meaningful when they are shared by our members. Our goal is to share some of these stories leading up to and as a part of our centennial celebration.

Please share your stories with MSBA’s communications staff — Greg Abbott (gabbott@mnmsba.org) or Bruce Lombard (blombard@mnmsba.org) — to share how MSBA has successfully helped you and/or your school board. We will have a display of your stories at the Leadership Conference and also plan to have a place where you can record an audio story of your own.

Contact Kirk Schneidawind at kschneidawind@mnmsba.org.
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One of the most important benefits MSBA provides its school board members is legislative advocacy. The MSBA Government Relations staff — Grace Keliher, Denise Dittrich and Kimberley Dunn Lewis — are as skilled and knowledgeable as any lobbyist in St. Paul. However, the education issues the Government Relations team prioritizes don’t materialize out of thin air. MSBA’s positions on education issues come largely from the minds of our public school board members through our grass-roots Delegate Assembly process. School board members from throughout the state are elected for a two-year term by their peers to serve as delegates. Each December, these delegates discuss and vote on various legislative resolutions submitted by school boards and individual school board members. Resolutions that receive a majority vote, as well as positions adopted during previous years, become the basis for MSBA staff lobbying efforts on behalf of all the state’s public school boards.

The 2018 Delegate Assembly approved several important resolutions that proved to be key issues during 2019 legislative session — including the full funding of school safety grants, additional money on the education funding formula, and bills relating to special education funding and reducing the cross-subsidy.

New Delegates Wanted

Denise Dittrich, MSBA’s Associate Director of Government Relations, said

New London-Spicer School Board member Lucinda Dahlberg was a first-time delegate at the 2018 Delegate Assembly. Dahlberg co-authored the only resolution that passed unanimously during the event. Her resolution called for “one predictable and equitable special education formula.”

Photo courtesy of the New London-Spicer School District

No experience necessary for the Delegate Assembly

New London-Spicer School Board member Lucinda Dahlberg recalls her first time as a delegate

By Bruce Lombard, MSBA Associate Director of Communications
participating in the Delegate Assembly can provide school board members with one of their most fulfilling experiences.

“The Delegate Assembly is a meaningful way for school board members to get involved and influence the legislative process as it relates to public schools,” said Dittrich, who also served in the Minnesota House of Representatives from 2005 to 2012. “Lawmakers ask for resolutions that evolve out of the Delegate Assembly — they respect what board members think.”

When the 2018 Delegate Assembly concluded, so did the two-year election term for those delegates. In summer 2019, MSBA will hold new elections for a two-year election cycle for 2019-2020.

MSBA is encouraging school board members — with or without Delegate Assembly experience — to run for a delegate spot this summer.

New board members should not be intimidated about participating. New London-Spicer’s Lucinda Dahlberg was one newcomer up for the challenge. Dahlberg was a relatively new school board member (seated in January 2017) before getting appointed to fill a vacancy for the 2018 Delegate Assembly.

“I wanted to participate in the Delegate Assembly to get more involved with legislative platforms, to help school districts and continue my commitment to ensure quality education for all,” Dahlberg said.

The Pre-Show

To help prepare herself for the Delegate Assembly, Dahlberg attended one of MSBA’s Pre-Delegate Assembly meetings in November.

“I found the Pre-Delegate Assembly meeting very helpful as we walked through each of the 22 resolutions with background and rationale,” Dahlberg said. “It was good to be a part of the discussion and ask questions during the meeting.”

If a delegate is unable to attend a Pre-Delegate Assembly meeting, MSBA also offers a webinar around mid-November and a “Delegate Assembly 101” course during the afternoon of the day before the Delegate Assembly.

“I also listened to the Pre-Delegate Assembly webinar because it was my first time as a delegate,” Dahlberg said. “It was a lot of information for each resolution to take in, so just hearing it a second time was valuable.”

Showtime

December 1, 2018, was the big day. Held at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Minneapolis - Park Place, the Delegate Assembly featured 120 school board member delegates representing 106 different school districts. Depending on how delegate election results shake out, multiple members from the same school board can serve on the Delegate Assembly in their designated MSBA Area. Dahlberg was joined at the Delegate Assembly with two fellow New London-Spicer School Board members, Robert Moller (who has since retired) and Renee Nolting.

During the 2018 Delegate Assembly, the New London-Spicer School Board submitted three resolutions. Dahlberg was involved in drafting one resolution that called for an adoption of “one predictable and equitable special education formula.”

The official resolution statement was: “Be it resolved, that MSBA urges the Legislature to adopt one predictable and equitable special education funding formula which eliminates the cap and returns transportation to a fully funded dedicated revenue source.”

During the floor debate, Dahlberg gave a short statement about why she supported the resolution and asked for its passage by the delegates.

“I worked with our Superintendent Paul Carlson and MSBA’s Denise Dittrich to draft the language for this resolution,” Dahlberg said. “Superintendent
Carlson and Denise did an excellent job of making sure that this resolution was documented completely and ultimately contributing to the success of it unanimously passing.”

The resolution Dahlberg co-scripted was the only measure that passed unanimously — by a resounding 109-0 vote.

Dahlberg said she, Moller and Nolting were thrilled and honored that the resolution unanimously passed. “There was definitely unity from delegates on this issue,” she said. “The new special education funding formula implemented in 2015-2016 clearly creates inequities and unpredictability in funding for school districts. We would like to see the caps removed and a separate revenue source for special education transportation costs.”

The New London-Spicer delegation’s second resolution did not fare as well as its first. Resolution No. 2 — which called for supporting “student and staff ratios of under 300-to-1 for number of students to counselors and social workers per school site, provided the state funds additional positions needed” — failed 87-24.

“After hearing the discussion from all the delegates, it was clear that the resolution needed some language clarifications to address some of the concerns brought up,” Dahlberg said. “So, there might be an opportunity to revise and try again.”

New London-Spicer went out on a positive note with its final resolution of the day. Their third proposal called for the Minnesota Legislature to modify M.S. 123B.02, Subd. 21 to include “renewable energy” and “energy storage systems” and passed easily on a 102-4 vote.

“It was wonderful to hear the discussion from the delegates at the meeting, and we were excited that this resolution passed,” Dahlberg said. “It would be beneficial for school districts to allow the storage of energy and to help with overall utility energy needs.”

**Looking back — and ahead**

Overall, Dahlberg, now the current chair of the New London-Spicer Board, has a favorable impression of her initial Delegate Assembly experience. “It was great to be a part of the Delegate Assembly,” she said. “It is amazing to see districts come together on issues that matter for public education.”

Dahlberg added that the grass-roots event was a great way to get involved with the legislative “roadmap” for issues involving schools and public education.

In the future, Dahlberg said it would be nice if MSBA created some sort of “Delegate Assembly Handbook” for delegates — a document that would include Delegate Assembly procedures, Delegate Assembly FAQs, Delegate Assembly rules, and previous years’ minutes, for starters.

Dahlberg said she would definitely encourage other board members — including those with no previous experience — to get involved in this process. “I was so thankful for the wonderful staff at MSBA — Denise Dittrich and Grace Keliher — and our Superintendent Paul Carlson for the time they spent helping develop the language and support documents for the ‘adopt one predictable and equitable special education formula’ resolution.”

As for herself, Dahlberg said she would welcome another opportunity to be involved with the Delegate Assembly again as a delegate. “The Delegate Assembly process is a way to support our schools and get involved in the legislative platforms for public education,” she said. “It has been great to be involved with the process and help shape the MSBA’s legislative agenda.”

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The National School Boards Association’s Magna Awards program has a long history of recognizing school district innovation and creativity in helping increase student achievement.

The 2019 Magna Awards program focused on equity in education — recognizing school district programs that remove barriers to achievement for vulnerable or underserved children.

A pair of Minnesota school districts earned 2019 Magna Awards — Roseville Area Schools and St. Paul Public Schools. Roseville Area’s “Access and Equity in College Credit Classes” was a winner in the 5,000 to 20,000 enrollment category and St. Paul’s “Student Engagement and Advancement Board” was recognized in the over 20,000 enrollment group.

The Magna Award judges looked for programs that:

- Remove barriers to achievement for vulnerable or underserved children, based on race, ethnicity, gender, special needs, geography, or socioeconomic status.
- Support their school board’s equity mission and vision for the district.
- Exhibit success over time.
- Have longevity and sustainability.
- Can be replicated by other school districts with similar conditions and resources.

See profiles of Roseville Area and St. Paul’s programs on Pages 13-14.
The objective of this program is to have broad successful participation in college credit classes that is proportional to race-ethnicity groups in the student body. The district began tracking equity metrics to measure progress in eliminating racially predictable outcomes. It looked at race-ethnicity differences across many areas including participation in rigorous coursework. The data for pre-Advanced Placement (AP) and college credit classes showed around 40 percent under-representation of students of color, a result needing immediate intervention. The metric provided an impetus to build on a best practice initiative showing promise to narrow the gap: Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). The district used this college readiness program schoolwide to establish a culture of taking rigorous coursework and provide intentional instruction in skills needed for success; offer a wide array of career and college credit classes that are relevant to different interests and backgrounds; and redesign the AP program to remove barriers and build support for success.

**Removing barriers:** The district listened to and engaged students to understand barriers. Students did not see themselves as having the skills and confidence to be successful. Taking this insight, teachers worked together in a newly formed AP Professional Learning Community (PLC) to invite students in, remove prerequisites, and change the teaching mindset of AP classes (the most frequently available of college credit class) to intentionally instruct in skills not just content, building relationships, and increasing support available to students. To address other barriers, the number and diversity of courses were expanded, more than doubling the offerings and adding career preparation and technical classes. The AVID strategies and tools were implemented schoolwide to become accessible to students beyond those in the AVID program.

**Schoolwide implementation of AVID Principles —** AVID is designed to close the achievement gap by preparing students to be college ready. The district offers the AVID program to students who have academic potential with average to high test scores and who are either the first in their families to attend college, a member of a group historically underserved in college, from a low-income family, or experiencing special circumstances.

**Evidence of success:** This program has been in place for eight years and has a proven record of sustainable results. It has increased participation by students of color 260 percent over four years while maintaining average test scores by subgroup. Not just students of color benefitted, but also white students who had not yet gained access (95 percent increase). Participation by race-ethnicity subgroups is now roughly proportional to the student body and is translating to a higher rate of attending college.

The program also has contributed to more students graduating and a narrowing of race-ethnicity gaps. From 2014-17, the district’s four-year graduation rate increased 4 percent, resulting in 87 percent of students graduating in four years. Because the gains were concentrated amongst minority students, the graduation gap between white and minority students narrowed: 12 percent of Asian students gained 15 percent, Hispanic students 14 percent, and African-American students 5 percent. White students stayed relatively constant. The district and each race-ethnic group currently outperform the state of Minnesota.

To learn more about this program, contact Roseville Area School Board Chair Kitty Gogins at kitty.gogins@isd623.org or visit www.isd623.org.
The St. Paul Public Schools Student Engagement and Advancement Board (SEAB) is a team of 13 students who develop and implement strategies that amplify student voice. SEAB works on multiple initiatives each year to increase student voice in decision-making at the board and administration level. The board, administration, staff, and students may choose to submit a project proposal for SEAB to work on. It works as a group to determine what the members want to do during the year or to design its own projects with input from the student body.

In 2015, the school board discussed how to increase student voice in decision-making processes. In Minnesota, however, state law does not allow a student member of a school board to have voting rights. Instead of implementing a student seat, the board formed a task force that included board members, district administration, and staff who had already been running youth leadership programming. With student input, the task force designed a structure of students who would work collaboratively on district improvement from the perspective of students.

Since that time, SEAB has completed numerous projects and proposed multiple changes that have helped the districts create a more inclusive and student-centered district. Based on its recommendation, a board seat shared by SEAB members was created with the understanding that no one student or group of students can speak on behalf of students, but the shared seat could provide the perspective of the group.

Removing barriers: SEAB is designed to remove barriers to achievement for underserved students in three main ways: increased voice for marginalized students, policy change, and practice change.

Over the past four years, members of SEAB have represented many experiences of the district’s most marginalized students. They have experienced homelessness, been suspended or dismissed, dealt with micro- and macro-aggressions from staff, been harassed by school resource officers, and managed learning differences. SEAB members have identified as immigrants, members of each of the district’s largest ethnic groups, refugees, transgender, gender non-conforming, LGBTQ, and English language learners. Their diversity, along with their commitment to inclusivity, has brought new perspective to institutional decision-makers by centering their personal experiences.

SEAB works with the board to co-create policy change that improves student experience and outcomes. In 2016, SEAB conducted a project on inclusivity that was proposed by the board. It conducted broad-based research with peers and presented the board with a series of proposals for improvement, including three policy changes. Each resulted in the implementation of a policy change.

Evidence of success: SEAB was launched in fall 2015. Program success is measured by deliverable outcomes. SEAB has brought about change in several policies, including a new policy ensuring ongoing student voice in district decision-making, a nongendered dress code, and a graduation attire policy.

Changed practices include: creating a districtwide staff training on inclusive schools; implementing student advisories for SROs at the district and school levels; and securing a role for students in superintendent searches.

To learn more about this program, contact St. Paul Program Manager Shaun Walsh at shaun.walsh@spps.org or visit www.spps.org.

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We asked, you answered, and we ARE listening

Management Services Survey will help MSBA better serve its membership

By Amy Fullenkamp-Taylor, MSBA Director of Management Services

Did you know …

• MSBA responded to more than 15,000 calls and emails and logged over 696,000 web views?

• More than 90 percent of school board members and superintendents found MSBA “Hot Topics” to be accurate, understandable, and useful?

• More than 85 percent of superintendents and administrative assistants rely on MSBA’s election timeline to assist them with referenda and school board elections?

How do we know? YOU told us through the MSBA Management Services Survey that was distributed to the membership in October 2018.
We asked, you answered, and we ARE listening: You gave us great feedback! Your MSBA staff read, analyzed, and considered every one of your responses. As a result, we have four main takeaways to focus on in the next year.

**Data Hub:** The information most utilized on MSBA’s Data Hub (www.mnmsba.org/DataHub) was the teacher salary settlement data. Individuals indicated they appreciated having a resource to go to review previous years’ teacher salary settlement information for their own district and other districts to assist with their preparations for negotiations. However, some survey participants noted data was outdated or missing. We hear you! As MSBA reached out to districts that had not submitted their 2017-19 Teacher Salary Settlement Forms, we learned a large number of districts had experienced turnover in the positions they had identified as being responsible for completing and submitting the form. In order to assist individuals who are new to their district positions and who are responsible for completing and submitting the Teacher Salary Settlement Form, MSBA will be creating a settlement costing tutorial. This tutorial will be archived on MSBA’s website for members to access at their convenience as many times as they wish. MSBA will also be presenting information on settlement costing at its upcoming conferences and other educational organizations’ conferences. Consistent, accurate, and timely settlement reporting increases the value of this data for all MSBA members.

**Webinars:** Less than half of the survey participants responded “yes” to having participated in a webinar within the past six to 12 months. However, those who had participated in a webinar liked the ability to print and/or download the presentations for future reference, the interactive question-and-answer portions of the webinars, and that the webinars were an easy way to stay engaged when limited on time. With that said, when quizzed a little deeper about lack of participation, board members, superintendents, and other administrators indicated lack of time was the primary reason they were not able to watch the webinars. Some also indicated they were not aware of the webinars. We hear you! As of today, MSBA has archived all webinars since January 31, 2018, on its website at www.mnmsba.org/Webinars. These webinars cover topics ranging from “Harassment: What School Boards and Administrators Need to Know” to “What Board Members Really Need to Know About Parliamentary Procedure” and can be accessed 24/7. Also, in order to help ensure our members are aware of upcoming webinars, we are now promoting them via multiple avenues: email, the Leader newsletter, eClippings, and MSBA’s website. Our most recent webinar in March 2018, had more than 150 registrants. Finally, MSBA will continue to evaluate the quality of the experience and the days and times the webinars are being offered and seek your input for future topics.

**Core resources:** For those survey participants who use the core resources, the ones cited as being most frequently accessed included the MSBA Service Manual, The First Monday in January Booklet, Law Bulletins, and the Superintendent Evaluation Workbook. However, again, several participants responded they did not know the core resources existed or where to find them. We hear you! Over the course of the next year, MSBA will be highlighting the various
services and resources available to our members and how to access them. With that said, the new “Goals- and Standards-Based Superintendent Evaluation: A Resource for School Board Members and Superintendents” booklet, created in partnership with the Minnesota Association of School Administrators based on feedback received from our members, is now available on MSBA’s website at www.mnmsba.org/Resources/Employment-Resources.

**Elections:** Superintendents and administrative assistants find enormous value in MSBA’s election timelines — from the timelines for board elections to bond and operating levy referendums. In addition, more than 85 percent of survey participants indicated they followed MSBA referendum results. In order to provide members more up-to-date information on election night, MSBA has started live-tweeting referendum results as well as providing updates on its website, in The Leader newsletter, and on social media. The survey also showed that despite only 12 percent of school districts having odd-year elections, interest in MSBA’s school election officer webinar training, in the odd-years, is still very strong. In even years, county auditors are mandated to provide training to school election officers; however, no such requirements exists for odd years. Therefore, about 15 years ago, MSBA partnered with the Secretary of State’s Office to offer training for school election officers in the odd years to fill the training gap. Until interest drops, MSBA will continue to work with the Secretary of State’s Office to provide odd-year election officer training. If you have specific election questions, please contact MSBA’s Greg Abbott at gabbott@mnmsba.org.

Did you know? In 2018, due to changes in legislation and member input, we updated existing Model Master Agreement language and Model forms including the following:

**Teacher Related Documents**
- Updated the request for dues checkoff and unrequested leave of absence Model Master Agreement language
- Removed the fair share fee Model Master Agreement language
- Created Model Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4 individual teaching contracts that replace the previous Model individual teaching contract
- Created Tier 2 Model Master Agreement language

**Principal Related Documents**
- Updated the request for dues checkoff and unrequested leave of absence Model Master Agreement language
- Removed the fair share fee Model Master Agreement language

**Nonlicensed Employee Related Documents**
- Updated the request for dues checkoff Model Master Agreement language
- Removed the fair share fee Model Master Agreement language

We appreciate your feedback, and we are consistently reviewing ways to provide resources that are relevant, effective, and interesting for you.

MSBA’s mission is to support, promote, and strengthen the work of public school boards. Our promise to you is to continue to ask for your feedback and study your input. We know the MSBA membership is focused on becoming high-performing school boards and administrative teams with the ultimate goal of excellent student achievement for all students in Minnesota.

Again, thank you for your feedback. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve you.

Contact Amy Fullenkamp-Taylor at ataylor@mnmsba.org.
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**Contact:**

Kerry Glader, 763.633.6571
KGlader@plaistedcompanies.com
Minnesota’s new governor — Gov. Tim Walz — is a former teacher at Mankato West High School. When it came time to appoint the state’s next education commissioner, Gov. Walz selected one of his colleagues, Mary Cathryn Ricker.

Commissioner Ricker, a native of Hibbing, is a National Board-certified middle school English teacher with more than a decade of classroom teaching experience, including stints in St. Cloud and St. Paul. She also served as executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers and as the president of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers.

Recently, Commissioner Ricker took time from her busy schedule to answer questions from MSBA. In the following interview, she provides her vision for improving public education, addresses the school board’s role in closing the achievement gap, and explains how the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) can help fix inequities in schools.

**MSBA: What is your vision for improving K-12 education?**

**MARY CATHRYN RICKER:** My vision for improving education is to make sure all of our students feel seen, heard and believed. This means that we have to shine a light on everything we are trying that is working — from our efforts to
end discipline disparities to all the different programs our educators are working on to close achievement gaps and ensure our all of our students are having positive experiences in school. That means students and families are welcomed into their school environment with teaching and learning conditions built to support them, with paraprofessionals, teachers and administrators trained to meet their needs and provide meaningful ways of partnering and communicating.

**MSBA: What approach will you take to help close the achievement gap? How can school boards help close the achievement gap?**

**MCR:** There are so many great ideas finding success with our students to both close the achievement gap and end discipline disparities. It is my responsibility to amplify those programs so that other educators in Minnesota can learn from them. It’s also my responsibility to share the most promising emerging research on closing gaps and ending disparities and ensuring the Minnesota Department of Education offers support to implement and support those ideas.

School board members are valuable partners in this work because you see what’s working in your districts. Or you see what’s not working in your districts. You’re an important line of communication for sharing what works in your district. You also have this great built-in network among school boards where you have an opportunity to share with each other what is working in your districts, and ask for ideas from each other when things aren’t working. Of course, this is all in addition to the work you do to nurture high-quality teaching and learning environments where the most productive gap-closing work happens.

**MSBA: Many of the past state education commissioners have been former superintendents or administrators. As a teacher and former American Federation of Teachers executive vice president, what do you bring to the job that other commissioners may not have had? How do you balance the needs of teachers with the needs of school boards and superintendents?**

**MCR:** I don’t really look at my experience versus former state commissioners. I look at the work of former commissioners and tap into my experience and see how I can build on our collective work. We all wanted teaching and learning conditions where our students will thrive. As a National Board-certified teacher, accomplished teaching has always been an important lens for the decisions I make and the work I do. As someone who has studied deeply the conditions for high-quality teaching and learning, that is another lens for improvement. These lenses are ever-present in my work.

My experience has shown me that the best, most productive work for our students and their families happens in partnership. That means...
educators, superintendents, school boards, other administrators, families and communities coming together to rally around all of our kids and work to close gaps and end discipline disparities. I can’t imagine any of my predecessors didn’t believe that, so now it is time for me to continue encouraging and implementing this work across the state. This is not new work to me.

**MSBA: How do you get rural school districts and urban school districts — which have very different needs — to follow the same “One Minnesota” path the governor envisions? How do you meet the needs of rural school districts while also helping urban and suburban districts?**

**MCR:** The One Minnesota vision puts Minnesota students at the center and all of our public schools have students in common. Our biggest question is: what should a high-quality, universal, public school experience look like for every student in the state of Minnesota? We do need to pay particular attention to what our schools need individually, whether they are rural, urban, suburban, small, large, alternative, or comprehensive. We have to pay attention to the unique needs of those diverse schools to support them in meeting the needs of our diverse learners across the state of Minnesota.

**MSBA: The population of students in Minnesota is diverse. How can the Minnesota Department of Education help school districts become more inclusive and fix inequities in schools?**

**MCR:** The first thing the MDE needs to do is be the champion for the benefits such a wonderful diversity of students and families bring to us. It goes beyond admiration though, and includes deliberate work to incorporate those assets into our daily work to meet the needs of our students and their families. From diversifying our school staff to more reflective curriculum, MDE should be your partner. Because our schools know their students best, MDE must provide a balance between supporting the necessary equity work in our individual public schools and districts with access to statewide equity programming to end discipline disparities and close gaps. Our role is to both fill in and enhance the work that happens at the local level. MDE also plays an important part in understanding and addressing the statewide trends to determine where we are making progress and areas where we are still struggling collectively.

Contact Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker at mde.commissioner@state.mn.us. Learn more about the commissioner at https://education.mn.gov/mde/about/cmsh.
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The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) remains committed to identifying and creating resources for school districts to use in implementing evidence-based practices. We recognize that it is sometimes hard to scale up research in your own settings, and our goal is to help you identify potential solutions to your unique problems of practice and help you evaluate the impact on student outcomes. To that end, I would like to provide you with some resources we have developed to address some common issues and concerns.

**Research Briefs**

CAREI has partnered with Dr. Katie Pekel from the Organizational Leadership and Policy Department (OLPD) to develop six “briefs” that highlight reviews of research in six areas. Our goal was to develop tools to aid educators in making research-informed decisions about practice. These briefs include looping, platooning, class size, literacy universal screeners, instructional coaching, and homework. We would like to continue developing more briefs and would welcome feedback from you about practices to review.

- **Class size**: [www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-ClassSize.pdf](http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-ClassSize.pdf)
- **Homework**: [www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Homework.pdf](http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Homework.pdf)
- **Instructional coaching**: [www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-InstructionalCoaching.pdf](http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-InstructionalCoaching.pdf)
- **Literacy universal screeners**: [www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Literacy.pdf](http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Literacy.pdf)
- **Looping**: [www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Looping.pdf](http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Looping.pdf)
- **Platooning**: [www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Platooning.pdf](http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-Brief-Platooning.pdf)

**Attendance**

The reauthorization of federal education law with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 has prompted state-level focus on student attendance as a robust metric of school quality/student success. In addition, ESSA requires states to report how many students
are chronically absent on their school report card. During the 2015-2016 school year — the most recent national data available — the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) found that nearly 8 million students were chronically absent, defined as missing 15 or more school days during the year. In Minnesota, 102,071 students missed 15 or more school days in 2016. That is enough students to fill U.S. Bank Stadium, Target Center, and Target Field!

Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts a variety of student outcomes, including mathematics and reading achievement, social-emotional development, grade retention and dropout, and student discipline and is associated with risky behaviors such as substance use. Students with excessive absenteeism are also at increased risk for school dropout, which is further associated with economic, social, and health problems in adulthood. In addition to the individual effects of absenteeism, research has found that classrooms with high rates of absenteeism have spillover effects with lower test scores observed for all students in the classroom, even the students with good attendance.

CAREI has two resources to help districts address chronic absenteeism. First, we are offering districts an opportunity to participate in a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) with other districts to identify solutions and evaluate the impact of these solutions on student attendance. CAREI will assist districts in reviewing their attendance data using a tool we have developed to easily disaggregate attendance by a number of important variables. We will also help districts collect and analyze the “root causes” of attendance problems using a student and parent survey developed by one of our researchers, Dr. Amber Humm Patnode. Once root causes are identified, we will facilitate the development of action plans to address the root causes and evaluate whether solutions are having a positive impact on attendance. We are willing to host these NIC’s regionally. Please let us know if you have interest in starting a NIC in your district or region.

Second, we have conducted a literature review on Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism for our CARE District Assembly members. We are providing open access to this document to assist educators across the state in addressing this important issue.

Access this document at www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/CAREI-AbsenteeismReview.pdf.

We hope these resources are useful to your district in your ongoing effort to implement evidence-based practices.

Contact Kim Gibbons at kgibbons@umn.edu with any questions or comments.
Parliamentary procedure doesn’t have to be the two scariest words for a new school board member. As long as you know how to make a motion, move an amendment and ask for point of order, it’s easy. We encourage school boards to use Robert’s Rules of Order to bring common courtesy, a chance to hear all viewpoints and a way to run an efficient meeting.

MSBA has a recorded webinar on parliamentary procedure that board members can view 24/7 at www.mnmsba.org/Webinars.

But as with any webinar, there were some questions we didn’t get to. So below are three follow-up questions after our webinar was completed.

Q: When do you need to take a roll call vote?
A: A roll call vote is when the board team member taking minutes asks each board member how they voted. There are two requirements in law that require a roll call vote. One is the termination of a continuing contract teacher. The second is when you vote on unrequested leave of absence (ULA) placement.

The third instance — not specified in law but must always be done — is when the person taking the minutes cannot tell if a vote is 4-3 or 3-4 or 5-2 or is otherwise unable to determine how a board member voted. In this instance, the person taking the minutes shall ask for a roll call vote because it is of utmost importance that the votes of the board are recorded properly.

Outside of those three instances, some boards also have a past practice of doing roll call votes on resolutions. Some only do roll call votes if the vote is not unanimous or if more than one person votes yes or no. Those votes — and any other votes — can be done in a roll call fashion if a majority of the board finds that it is the best and most accurate way to record votes.

Q: After a vote on an issue, I found out that the board didn’t follow proper parliamentary procedure.
procedure in approving that issue. Does that mean the board has to take that vote over again?

A: In our webinar, we are quick to say that law always trumps Robert’s Rules. And those rules are guidelines for boards to follow. So, if your board approves an item but strays from the proper use of the rules — and nobody on the board objects — that issue is considered approved. If a board member sees that something in the rules is not being followed, the proper procedure is to say “point of order” and then correct the procedure to follow the rules. If nobody objects, Robert’s Rules assumes that the board approves deviating from the rules to vote on the issue. You do NOT have to revote or discuss the issue again.

Q: We have a board member who, after a vote doesn’t go his way, badmouths the decision. He says that MSBA’s “speaking with one voice” ethics are trampling on his free speech. What does Robert’s Rules say about that?

A: The ethical issue cited reflects on a basic tenet of democracy. Henry Robert encouraged full discussion of issues so all points of view were considered. After the vote, he advised: “the minority, having failed to win a majority to their views, should gracefully submit and recognize the action as that of the entire organization, and cheerfully to assist in carrying it out, until they can secure its repeal.”

In a democratic process, all votes won’t go your way. As a board, you work as a team with your eye on student achievement as the prize. A related lesson is that sometimes you have to give the majority’s direction a chance to succeed. That doesn’t mean you have to be the biggest cheerleader for it. It means that a school district can go only in one direction. In a democracy, the majority determines the direction.

Board members are elected to a nonpartisan team of people — all very intelligent and with worthwhile opinions. A board made up of seven members wanting the district to go in seven different directions will bring progress to a standstill and end up hurting students. Gracefully accepting a decision does not trample on people’s freedom of speech. Everyone at the board table has an opportunity to be heard. Once a decision is made, the most productive path for students and the district is to implement the majority’s decision without taking steps to impede success.

This is not an MSBA directive. It was our nation’s founders’ core belief. And it was also advice given by a very smart person, Henry Robert.

Contact Greg Abbott at gabbott@mnmsba.org.

Jaymyson Sillman was hired by MSBA on March 1 for Information Technology Support. Sillman had been interning with MSBA since October 2018.

Sillman lives just outside of St. Peter and recently graduated from South Central College in fall 2018 with an AAS degree in Networking Services.

At MSBA, Sillman will assist Director of Technology Donn Jenson with day-to-day operations such as hosting webinars, updating software, and helping all staff with technology-related issues.

Also, Sillman will be responsible for keeping the MSBA database updated and helping school board members throughout the state with any website issues.

One of the largest projects Sillman will be working on is to help MSBA seamlessly move all their locally stored resources online and into the cloud.
Lucy Payne — “The more you learn, the more you know, the more impact you can make”

MSBA Director District 6 Board Director is well-traveled, well-educated

By Bruce Lombard, MSBA Associate Director of Communications

Lucy Payne has put down strong roots in Minnesota, but she took a lot of detours along the way.

Born in California, Payne lived in Maryland, Iowa, Washington D.C., Rhode Island, Alabama, and New Mexico before settling down in the North Star State.

Though her father worked at the University of Iowa, he also served in the U.S. Navy Reserve for many summers. “This allowed our family to spend summers in various locations across the country when I was in elementary school,” Payne said. “With my father’s work at the university and taking sabbaticals, I attended five different schools in three states in five years while growing up. This gave me exposure to many different communities and schools.”

After graduating from Iowa City West High School, Payne would later earn a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from the University of Iowa. She then taught preschool and elementary school in El Paso de Robles, California, while earning a master’s degree in Reading.

Payne eventually returned to Iowa to complete a Ph.D. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education (with concentrations in elementary mathematics and curriculum development). In 1997, she moved to Minnesota to work at the University of St. Thomas in the School of Education. Since then, she has been a faculty member in Teacher Education, an associate dean for the School of Education, and the Assessment and Accreditation Liaison for the university.

Payne was appointed to the Mahtomedi School Board in 2014. In 2018, Payne was elected to the MSBA Board of Directors — where she represents the northeast metro Minnesota school board members of MSBA Director District 6.

Payne and her husband, Lee Martinson, have two children (Anna and Erik) and a “crazy dog.” Anna and Erik attend Mahtomedi High School and are involved in theater, music, and event broadcasting.

“My daughter loves to perform,” Payne said. “She plans to major in musical theatre in college. My son’s interests are in technical theater, broadcast, and STEM. He will be learning more about technical theater at the Guthrie this summer. To support my kids and all the performing arts in our area, I am one of the founders and current co-president of the Zephyr Performing Arts Foundation.”

In addition to her day job and work...
as a school board member, Payne currently serves on the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB).

In the following interview, Payne discusses what makes being a board member so rewarding, touts Mahtomedi’s Fab Lab, and reveals the toughest issue MSBA Director District 6 schools are currently facing.

MSBA: What led you to run for your local school board?

LUCY PAYNE: I was appointed to my local school board when a director stepped down. I had been following the school board closely for the six years prior to being appointed. I was in my sixth year serving on the District Curriculum Advisory Committee, my fourth year on the Mahtomedi Engineering Advisory Committee, and my second year on the Gifted and Talent Committee. The parent of one of my son’s friends suggested I run for the board, so when the seat opened for appointment I applied. I never thought I would run for the seat in an election! I have enjoyed the work so much I have run for election twice.

MSBA: What is the most rewarding thing about being a school board member?

LUCY PAYNE: The most rewarding thing about being a school board member is the opportunity to work collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and students to create an educational system that is always improving to meet the needs of the students and communities which it serves. Through this work I have had the opportunity to meet people across the district and beyond. The people I have had the honor to work with have pushed my thinking and made me a better person. I appreciate the passion of all those involved and look forward to the systems and experiences we can create for our students to prepare them for their future.

MSBA: Are there any negatives to being a board member?

LUCY PAYNE: The negatives are easily outweighed by the positives!

MSBA: In 2011, the Mahtomedi School District become the first K-12 institution to house a Fab Lab (fabrication laboratory) connected to the MIT network. Has the Fab Lab been a success for your district?

LUCY PAYNE: The Fab Lab has been a great addition to our district. We have created a space and programing that allows students to explore their passion for engineering and creating solutions to real-world problems with a global perspective. The Fab Lab was created through a deliberate process that brought community stakeholders together to consider education in a different way than they had experienced. The academic programming in the Fab Lab has continued to evolve to meet the needs of students within our budget. As we work through the strategic planning process as a district, I am hopeful we can find other ways to support students’ passion in our schools.

We selected Mahtomedi Public Schools due to the engineering program. However, my children have found their passions in other areas and have not taken high school courses in the Fab Lab. As a family, we have utilized the programing offered through Community Education and loved it!

MSBA: What is the toughest issue that Mahtomedi and/or MSBA Director District 6 is dealing with right now?

LUCY PAYNE: I think the toughest issue for all schools right now is sharing our story. Individuals outside
of educational systems don’t have a full understanding of the current realities in public schools. Due to this, schools end up under-resourced and oftentimes criticized. We need to find ways to share the current realities of the systems we have and then find ways to work collaboratively with our stakeholders to create better ways of meeting the needs of all learners to be successful.

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

**LUCY PAYNE:** I would advise new board members to seek out information from multiple sources, including a strong mentor. Talk with other board members beyond your board about their experiences and consider what you can learn from them. Reach out into your community, to professional organizations, and the larger education community to think about issues from multiple perspectives. Don’t be afraid to think about outside of what you have experienced. The more you learn, the more you know, the more impact you can make. Be ready to think deeply and act courageously to create learning environments that best support learning for all students.

**MSBA: What do you like most about being on the MSBA Board?**

**LUCY PAYNE:** I truly enjoy the people I meet and work with on the MSBA Board. Board members are supportive of each other and staff have a strong passion to help all students in our state. I enjoy thinking about education from new perspectives and hear the positive things that are happening across the state of Minnesota. We are a diverse state and as we work and advocate, we must consider multiple contexts and what is ultimately best for all learners in the entire state of Minnesota. The time with the MSBA Board is where I have colleagues thinking about education from this perspective. I enjoy the opportunities the MSBA Board work gives me to meet others in education from legislators, policymakers, advocacy groups, educational experts, parents, students, and many more! I find the work to be empowering and rewarding.

**MSBA: What makes MSBA a valuable association for school board members?**

**LUCY PAYNE:** MSBA has almost 100 years of experience working with school boards in Minnesota. Their long history and current staff make MSBA the go-to organization for board members and others. They have deep knowledge and experience to share, but they are also aware when they need to find additional resources. They are collaborative and well respected by others in our state and at a national level.

Contact Lucy Payne at lucy.payne@isd832.net. View the complete MSBA Board of Directors at www.mnmsba.org/MSBABoard.
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MSBA’s Vendor Directory helps connect school districts with the products and services they need. The directory is always at your fingertips. You’ll find it printed in the back of every Journal magazine as well as on the MSBA website at www.mnmsba.org. Most listings in the web version of this directory include a link so you can head instantly to a website or email address. The directory includes everything you need to know to contact a company quickly—phone numbers, fax numbers and addresses—in an easy-to-read format. If you have a service or product you would like included in this directory, please contact Erica Nelson at 763-497-1778 or erica@pierreproductions.com.

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<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
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<td>Plaisted Companies, Inc.</td>
<td>(Kerry Glader)</td>
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<td>763-441-1100, Fax 763-633-1002</td>
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Legal issues for school districts

By Terry Morrow, MSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services

Recently, the Council of School Attorneys (COSA) gathered as part of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Annual Conference. Below, a selection of legal issues affecting school districts and boards examined during the COSA meeting are described briefly.

Student Data Privacy
In December 2018, the U.S. Department of Education announced a new investigations process designed to improve enforcement of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Department is now engaged in a process of updating FERPA regulations designed, in part, to improve the ways in which schools communicate with parents and students about district data practices. In a related step, the Department has posted on integrated data systems and student privacy that explains how school districts may participate in interagency communication, a subject that has gained significant consideration in proposals to enhance school safety. More information can be found at http://tinyurl.com/DOE-StudentPrivacy.

Student Discipline
Attorneys with significant experience at the Department of Justice and Office of Civil Rights (OCR) — which investigate Civil Rights Act Title VII discrimination claims — offered guidance regarding school discipline. They discussed the disparate impact test, which examines statistical data that may indicate that a district’s disciplinary policies or practices adversely impact a protected group in a disproportionate manner. Evidence of a disparate impact may be a “red flag,” according to one speaker, giving rise to an OCR investigation that will likely focus upon “discretionary discipline” decisions. Speakers observed that exclusionary discipline (suspension and exclusion) can lead to adverse educational, economic, and social impacts upon the student.

While the Trump administration has withdrawn school discipline guidance that the Obama administration had established, speakers encouraged districts to examine their data and consider steps that may be taken to address disparate impact. Training for superintendents, school board members, teachers, and staff is one step that speakers encouraged districts to consider.

Title IX and Sexual Harassment
On January 30, 2019, NSBA submitted comments on the federal Department of Education’s (DOE) proposed rulemaking regarding sexual harassment claims under Title IX. The DOE’s proposed rule, published in November 2018, seeks to clarify schools’ legal obligations to respond to and investigate sexual harassment claims and to clarify students’ options and rights. NSBA maintains that the proposed rule would create “extensive procedures,” definitions, and other requirements that may be appropriate for the university context, but may be challenging for local districts to implement in the K-12 context. The NSBA comments can be accessed at http://tinyurl.com/NSBA-Comments.

Education Technology
Legal experts urged school boards to review district practice on several
fronts, including crowdfunding and student data privacy. Crowdfunding, in which individuals or groups solicit donations online for a project or cause, can cause legal issues for school districts, including use of student photos or information in advertising, potential liability for fund use, and the purpose of the fundraising activity. NSBA has posted information on schools and crowdfunding at http://tinyurl.com/NSBA-Crowdfunding.

Student data privacy and cybersecurity continue to raise significant concerns for school districts. Malware, ransomware, data loss, phishing scams, and other security issues elevate the need for schools to institute cybersecurity plans and protections, including careful and consistent data backup. Speakers noted that school districts should ensure that their contracts with vendors include language on protection of data to which the vendor has access. NSBA has established a cybersecurity resources page at www.nsba.org/cyber/knowledge.

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Editor’s Note:

This is the second in a series about the history of the Minnesota School Boards Association. In the March issue, we looked at the years of 1920-1940. In this issue, we look at MSBA from 1940-1960.

With that help, they were able to launch The Journal magazine, more directly lobby the Legislature, and update basic functions such as fiscal year and board representation.

MSBA was able to seat its first director on the Board of the National School Boards Association, Edna Paul of St. Paul, who went on to be president of the national group. As men made up a vast majority of school board members at the time, having a female president put the Association ahead of the curve as far as gender equality. MSBA’s first female president, Ursula Christofferson, was elected in 1943, again way ahead of other associations.

However, the racial makeup of the Association board was still all white. And 100 years on, the Association – though it has had Native American and black directors – has yet to elect a black, Asian, Latino, or Native American president.

Despite big waves from the Brown v Board of Education ruling, you couldn’t tell anything related to segregation happened in schools from the 1954 Journals. And little was written about forced integration at Little Rock in 1957.

Discussions were very Minnesota-centric and rarely went into national events or politics, except for federal funding or a creation of a possible federal department of education.

The small, two-person staff of Bill Wettergren and Mildred Stoltz were beginning to become overwhelmed with all the work of putting out handbooks, Journals, lobbying, training, and planning for conferences.

Up through the 1960s, MSBA had its share of growing pains but made inroads that built stability into programs and services to board members. In the next 20 years, more staff will be added, more school districts will join the Association and its training and lobbying services will become recognized all over the state.

With World War II raging, it took most of the state’s energy just to maintain what education offerings students currently had, which wasn’t easy.

But once the war was over, and the business of the state turned to looking forward, MSBA started to discuss what would be required of school boards and our students of the future.

Despite the hardships of a nation at war, MSBA worked with the Legislature and state education officials to put together its first, comprehensive School Board Member Handbook in 1944. It came complete with a code of ethics, powers and duties of a board, running proper meetings, dealing with school finances, transportation of students, and more. It was a 124-page book sent to any district willing to pay the cost of 85 cents. In comparison, if today’s digital School Board Service Manual was printed, it would be about 920 pages.

The original handbook was billed as “124 pages of VITAL INFORMATION.” And it stood the test of time until a revision in 1950, mainly because of new laws that boosted the document to 142 pages.

The 1955 Convention saw a huge attendance that made registration a shoulder-to-shoulder affair.

In 1966, President W.G. Swanson wrote a prophetic article about what schools and school board members needed to do to advance our students and our nation.
Some of our communities have been satisfied too long with supporting schools providing services in grades one to eight,” Swanson wrote. “Today, industry and society demand a minimum of a high school education for your boy or girl.”

Swanson also demanded that school boards push for a minimum school year of nine months, teachers having uniform training so all instructors could be effective, as well as modern and professional school buildings.

“The public school system, in my judgment, is the most important business in America today, and it should be so regarded by all people professional and lay,” he said.

Already that year, the polio epidemic of 1946 had delayed the start of most schools until September 16 (even the State Fair was cancelled that year). The state stepped in to handle day-to-day projects. The board simply dismissed a poor one. Before your first term is over, you will have wondered 100 times why you ever took on the job.” It ends with a pitch to attend a workshop for new board members. By 1955, MSBA’s board of directors expanded workshops at the convention from the usual five to 10 different workshops.

**HIRING A STAFF PERSON**

The biggest step MSBA took was moving from a working board to a policy board with staff handling day-to-day projects. The board simply couldn’t keep up with updating the handbook, lobbying, and doing all other sorts of projects while scattered all over the state. The board was embarrassed that after starting the Journal in 1946, there was only ONE issue printed in 1948. The business side of the Association was becoming too much. That’s when talk of hiring an executive director turned to actually hiring a staff person. In 1950, Bill Wettergren was hired as a part-time staff member. With a makeshift office in the St. Peter high school, the business side of MSBA took off.

**CHANGING ROLES OF BOARD MEMBERS**

In 1952, the Richard Barnhart study of school boards listed examples of effective and ineffective behavior among board members. The most effective: focusing on policy. The least effective: micromanaging day-to-day operations and putting your own needs ahead of the needs of the students in the district. Demographics of a most-effective board member: Younger than age 60, parents with children in the school and high school educated. As to gender and effectiveness: “There is no relationship between gender of a board member and effectiveness.” (At the time, 93 percent of board member respondents in the survey were male.)

The Association, for 35 years, had elected new board of directors each year. By 1952, there was growing sentiment that new people each year stunted the Association’s growth. The board wanted more continuity. Starting in 1955, the board approved electing directors to three-year terms – something that is still done today.

In 1956, attendance at the convention rose to 2,900 members, forcing the board to move the 1957 convention into the bigger St. Paul Auditorium in following years.

“Since alcohol is a narcotic drug, psychologically habit-forming and resulting in addiction in at least 10% of moderate drinkers, it is incumbent on the public schools to teach abstinence rather than moderation. When dealing with narcotics, moderation is a dangerous doctrine.”

— Dr. John Goffin, Los Angeles Board of Education & Leadership Conference speaker
SOME EARLY ISSUE DEBATABLE BY MSBA MEMBERS

TEACHER SHORTAGES:
A lack of teachers was a big issue. For years, schools relied on single women who were underpaid, provided substandard housing, and given a list of rules to abide by. During the war, married women were considered. After the war, more men were encouraged to enter the teaching field, but it continued to be hard to find qualified teachers.

MSBA members pushed for $230,000 from the state to give $400 scholarships to any high school graduate who was interested in teaching but could not afford to go to a Normal School. Another proposal would be $75 scholarships to help with summer training for elementary teachers with less than two years of college training.

F.R. Adams, the Teacher Personnel Division Director from the Department of Education, reported that due to a shortage of teachers in 1946, nearly 1,800 rural schools had to be closed. Students in those schools had to be transported to the few schools that were open. Former teachers were given temporary permits.

TRANSPORTATION:
Though not required by law, many schools started a transportation system for students after the first World War. By 1944, state school districts spent nearly $4 million to transport nearly 100,000 students with 2,500 school buses.

Teachers with minors in a subject area were granted approval to teach full-time.

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be.” – Thomas Jefferson on the importance of education.

When asked about whether MSBA had a policy on pregnant students, the board in 1956 moved that the issue be referred to the Minnesota Association of School Administrators “along with the whole problem of sex education.”
“isolated students” who were more than four miles from the school.

**A LACK OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION:**

The *Minneapolis Star* wrote a scathing editorial about lack of attendance by rural farm boys between the ages of 16 and 17. As of 1946, Minnesota ranked 47th out of 48 states in attendance from this demographic. Overall attendance at high school placed Minnesota 18th in the nation. “Most disheartening is the principal reason farm boys do not go to high school. No, it is not the hardship on their parents. It is just plain apathy,” the editorial board wrote.

**OTHER INTERESTS TRYING TO TAKE MONEY FROM THE INCOME TAX FOR SCHOOLS FUND**

For three years – from 1947 to 1949 – automobile interests, county and city interests all pushed legislation that would eliminate the Income Tax School Fund or water it down so the money would go into one big state general fund that could be used for schools and other things, such as roads and city and county needs. In 1949, MSBA passed a unanimous resolution saying the Income Tax School Fund should be used exclusively for public school purposes. In 1950, the Legislature snuck in legislation for a constitutional amendment vote to eliminate schools as the sole beneficiary of the income tax. In 1948, schools offered the program. It grew to 237 schools in 1950. It was billed as a way to “put a halt to the practice of passing available through the high schools,” wrote then Department of Education Assistant Supervisor J.G. Neal.

In 1948, eight schools offered the program. In 1956 to push legislation that would “water it down so the public will be endangered by their mistakes if they are not trained well with training available through the high schools,” wrote then Department of Education Assistant Supervisor J.G. Neal.

There is no evidence to show that marriage, in itself, is a handicap to effective teaching. If the teacher is doing her duty, and her domestic life has not impaired her teaching services, there is no reason why the married woman teacher should not have equal consideration on any faculty. – from the Dec. 1951 Journal.

**TOO MANY SCHOOLS**

MSBA looked to other states for examples of how consolidation was handled. With 7,500 schools in 1949, the state adopted a survey plan to reorganize schools in 53 counties. The plan called for consolidation of 4,301 schools into 343 administrative districts. Citizens were to vote on the plans. The problem was, most citizens voted against consolidation, and those looking to consolidate couldn’t find adequate buildings for the influx of students. The problem stuck around for another decade. Momentum grew in 1956 to push legislation that would force schools with less than 10 students to close with no state aid for busing – they would have to consolidate. As momentum grew, it was something eventually passed by the Legislature in the 1960s.

**TOO MANY KIDS**

The “war babies” from World War I and II created a huge increase in the birth rate. The National Office of Vital Statistics showed 2.2 million births in 1939, but 3.6 million in 1949. This put even more pressure on schools to build bigger elementary schools.

**DRIVER’S EDUCATION**

An entire article in the 1950 Journal pushed schools to offer driver’s education. “Eventually most young people are certain to drive cars on public streets. This means that the general public will be endangered by their mistakes if they are not trained well with training available through the high schools,” wrote then Department of Education Assistant Supervisor J.G. Neal.

In 1948, eight schools offered the program. It grew to 237 schools in 1950. It was billed as a way to “put a halt to the practice of passing on our own bad driving habits to our young people.”

**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

In 1915, the state approved a provision designated as Special Classes for Handicapped Children, along with approving money for programs. It was underutilized until 1949, when the Legislature passed a new set of special education laws called the Special Class Program.

**THE RISE OF ANTI-PUBLIC EDUCATION GROUPS**

In 1954, MSBA’s Executive Director Bill Wettergren found it necessary to respond to groups that were criticizing public schools. “Organizations that are attacking the public schools as being too costly are spreading half-truths, and not completing statements that would tell the whole story of our financial condition,” he wrote. Calling out the Minnesota Taxpayers Association and the Bankers Association for spreading half-truths, he called on school board members to advocate with their legislators to give them the full picture of the success of public schools.

**BLACKBOARD JUNGLE**

We have our “13 Reasons Why” depiction of school life that many public schools were upset about. Back in 1955, it was the movie “Blackboard Jungle.” It showed a teacher in New York dealing with rough and violent public school students. Many school board associations, including MSBA, formally protested the movie. The MSBA board passed a resolution saying the movie “did not depict a true picture of activity in our public schools.” The protests helped encourage the public to attend, giving the film an $8.1 million haul.
Creating The Journal Magazine Took Many Twists and Turns

Information compiled by Greg Abbott

It took MSBA 26 years before it was able to put out The Journal magazine to its members. Talk about having some type of publication started in the 1930s, when the association had a decade under its belt and thought about trying some way to inform and communicate to all its members.

Though brought up many times, it never gained support because it was felt that the officers did not have the time or expertise to put together a publication. Another reason was the cost of publishing and mailing it out to members.

It wasn’t until 1940 when then-President John E. Casey of Jordan started to sway the board of directors that having a Journal could be done and was needed for the membership. But with little funding, it was shelved.

Two years later, Casey got buy-in from board members Ursula Christofferson, who was to become MSBA’s first female president in 1943, and Charles Drake of Minneapolis, who would also go on to lead the Association. A committee was appointed in 1942 to compile a report on how a Journal could be published and distributed. Casey, Christofferson and Drake looked at various journals around the country, picked type sizes, publishing companies, and investigated what was needed to comply with the U.S. Postal Service.

Everything was ready to launch in 1943, as Christofferson was named president. But the resolution suddenly changed from publishing a Journal to delaying it until after World War II because of mechanical difficulties and a shortage of paper.

In 1945, then-President Drake brought it back again. He received board approval for a two-part resolution that would be brought before the convention in 1946. The first part was to publish a Journal. The second part asked that dues be increased to provide funds for the publication. Drake campaigned vigorously for the publication.

“We felt that a Journal would bind the many school boards in Minnesota more closely together and would help to make the Association grow stronger,” Drake wrote.

During the 1946 March convention, after outgoing president Drake’s speech, the publication was approved unanimously. A publications committee was established to gather material and handle the printing and mailing. The small 28-page publication came out in October of 1946, featuring student cover art by Chisholm Senior High School student Stanley Pechovnik – a drawing called, “The American Boy.” In 1948, MSBA brought back the use of student art in its magazine.

President W.G. Swanson of Benson wrote a sobering column about a nation and a world trying to overcome the devastation of two World Wars. “Whatever hope there is of world government lies in the demonstrated ability of people to govern themselves. No more grass-roots agency of democratic government exists than the school board, which takes in hand the training of the whole company of future citizens,” he wrote.

The committee was very deliberate in getting messages from the leader of the Minnesota Education Association, the president of the Council of School Executives (superintendents), the Dean of the University of Minnesota College of Education, and others.

MOVING FROM COMMITTEE TO STAFF PUBLICATION

As board members left, the publications committee was always bringing in new board directors to learn the ropes of putting out a publication.

What once started as a monthly publication then turned into a monthly publication “during the school year” and then “except for December, which is combined with January.”

Not only was the Journal being published, but in 1944, the board also approved the first School Board Member Handbook. The 124-page booklet was given to all school board members and was praised as “the source” to help board members do their job.

Updating the handbook while publishing a monthly magazine, running conventions, and trying to push for legislation all became a huge burden on an association without a staff. In the next three years, talk grew about hiring an executive director and some sort of staff to help with all the duties.

The first four years of The Journal were met with missed deadlines, some Journals not published, and committee members trying to keep up with mailing one issue to the board clerk of 8,000 different schools.

Volume One, which started in October of 1946, continued into 1947 and 1948. In 1948, only one Journal was published during the school year. Volume Two didn’t begin until September of 1949, when the committee realized each fiscal year should have been a new volume. Chairman Myron Clark wrote: “During The Journal’s infancy, this periodical has not always kept pace with passing events. It has had a difficult time overcoming vicissitudes of adversity that so often afflict infants in this field,” he wrote. “Some of the handicaps that have retarded its development have been overcome, and it is hoped that this struggling infant can be nursed back to a healthy and useful activity.”

The next month, the first article in the Journal had a headline with a huge typo: In Association There is Strength.

The printing house was moved from Braham to Thief River Falls. By its May 1950 issue, Clark was again apologizing for the quality of the magazine.

“We are not satisfied that the Journal has achieved what it should and may achieve,” he wrote. “A publication like this requires more time, thought, and research than has been given to it.”

In September, with a new executive director in charge of the publication and the office of print moved to St. Peter, Volume 3 began – a small 16-page publication, with an odd new column.

MISS PRUNELLA’S PAGE

Ghostwriting was at its finest when Executive Director Bill Wettergren created a character who would write a page in the Journal “for a little nonsense.”

It had jokes: The teacher asks: “Teddy, if Mr. Brown has eight cows and divides them equally in half, how many cows will he have in each half?” Teddy replies: “I don’t know teacher, but we can find out because Mr. Brown lives just up the road.”

It had a taste of life in the office: “We just processed over 5,000 pieces of mail in the last 30 days. Maybe the directors will buy an address-o-graph.” Or “Miss Prunella is a busy girl these days with the coming of the convention.”

And it had a little response to comments from members: “I heard a few boards gripe that they think the dues are too high, but they must realize that if their organization is to function properly, there must be financial support.”
The column lasted 18 years, until Wettergren hired Mike Torkelson to be the Association’s public relations director.

“We sat down and had a talk about Bill handing off the Miss Prunella page,” Torkelson said. But the more they talked, he realized that maybe the column had run its course.

Miss Prunella never revealed her true identity (though most everyone knew it was Bill by the end of the fourth year because in the December 1954 edition he wished a happy holiday season from Mildred [Stotz, his staff secretary] and himself).

So at the end of the November 1968 edition, Miss Prunella signed off with one last “School is Out.”

CHANGES TO THE JOURNAL FORMAT

The October, 1986, Journal started a new trend to a more “traditional-sized” magazine format. The magazine had grown up and was now published every other month, instead of every month (except June-August).

By then, the magazine was at an established 4,400 circulation, with copies mailed out to all board members, superintendents, and “affiliate members” who paid the $5 postage fee for the issue.

Since 1950, Bill Wettergren was the editor. When he retired, Mike Torkelson took over as editor, until designating Kelly Martell as editor in 1994. In 1996, Wendy Wustenberg joined Kelly as a co-editor, eventually taking over editor duties. When the tornado hit in 1998, the Journal had just moved to a one-color format. Another change Wendy made was to put student art back into the magazine. That tradition continues today.

But the turmoil of coming back from the tornado turned the bi-monthly magazine into a haphazard schedule that ended up being labeled “Spring” or “Winter” or “Early Spring.” It wasn’t until 1999 that MSBA contracted with Nancy Kracke, who was then the public relations director for Chaska schools, and with the help of the new communications director, Shelley Tougas, the Journal was put back onto a bi-monthly schedule.

Tougas was also instrumental in moving the magazine to a two-color format in July of 2002, matching the new two-color torch logo for the Association. Tougas also pushed to move the magazine into a full-color mode, with the first issue coming out in July of 2004. She also took over as editor of the magazine in January of 2007 through January of 2008.

“The price kept coming down [on going full color] to the point that there was little difference between two-color and full color,” Tougas said. Advertisers liked seeing their ads in full color, and it gave a very professional feel to the magazine.

With new editor, Greg Abbott, the magazine added several new features, including Quotes of Note, Ask MSBA column, and (after feedback from a 2015 survey) a column on board policy, and a board spotlight on one of the Association’s board of directors. The magazine continues to win best publication awards and is the most-read publication that MSBA sends out.

Abbott also instituted a digital format for the Journal in 2008 for members who wanted to receive the publication digitally, instead of by postal mail. As of May 2019, there are 423 school board members and superintendents who receive the magazine electronically. The remaining 3,400 still want a paper publication mailed to them.

“One thing we’ve found with communication,” said Abbott, “is that just because you can send out a publication electronically doesn’t mean everyone wants it in that format.”

He said it’s important that MSBA continue to offer members a choice between a paper, mailed format and an electronic format – even though mailing publications costs more. “We want board members to be informed, so we need to send the publications out the way THEY want to read it,” said Abbott.

Eventually, Abbott sees print publications turning to all digital. But as long as 10% or more of the membership wants a paper, mailed copy, he hopes MSBA can still offer that format.
moved to the rear of the MacKenzie Real Estate and Insurance building a few years later. The board purchased a building downtown in 1966 when Bolton and Menk Engineering moved to Mankato. In 1991, the Association built a new office at the south end of town, and despite a tornado in 1998, this is where the rebuilt office stands today.

Even after retirement, Mr. St. Peter went on to be active in St. Peter politics as mayor and then to help run other local services and non-profits.

In his book, “A Bit of Heaven in St. Peter,” Robert Wettergren (Bill’s brother) writes that although St. Peter did not get the state capitol, as former Rep. Carl M. Johnson said, “With the Minnesota School Boards Association office in St. Peter, with Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, and with my being chair of the House Education Committee, St. Peter is at least the Education Capital of the State.”

**WORKING WITH BILL**

Bill had a big vision for being able to serve all of the school board members in the state. And he wanted a professional organization to carry out that work. So when the hippy culture hit the Midwest and some staff members started to sport mustaches, Bill’s “No facial hair rule” went into effect. For the rest of Bill’s time as executive director, all the male staff became very familiar with a razor, and had clean-shaven faces.

Wettergren served as executive director of MSBA for 33 years – from August of 1950 to June of 1983. He was constantly asking members what they needed and thinking of ways the Association could serve them better. His saying was: “We live for service, and accommodation is our middle name.” To staff, he was known as “180 pounds of Dynamite.”

The early staff of MSBA was a touch of Midwest “Mad Men” with a schedule that included a 10 a.m. break so the guys could sit and chat in the lobby, and smoke. One staff member, who years later went to move an old couch in the lobby area, saw that the smoke was so prevalent, it had actually changed the color of all the wallpaper into a sooty dark green.

**A LOBBYIST AT HEART**

In his obituary from September 5, 1992, many of his co-workers commented how he was a natural-born lobbyist who loved working the legislative halls and talking education. For many years, he was the senior lobbyist at the Capital and carried the respect from legislators on both sides of the aisle.

Former Gov. Wendell Anderson said: “As a freshman legislator, no person was kinder or more considerate to me than Bill.”

He had pride in being part of the eighth association for school boards in the nation and wanted to make a personal connection with members.

In 1952, he started an ambitious program to hold 11 area workshops throughout the state, traveling more than 2,500 miles to meet people. He could also brag in 1953 that the convention, held in St. Paul, had one of the largest exhibits of school products and services in the upper Midwest.

“Bill personified a commitment to public education, a belief in representative government and active service to one’s local community,” said former Executive Director Richard Anderson. “Through his efforts, MSBA became a model for other state associations to follow.”

Wettergren also tried to reach out from his lobbying efforts to inform board members, using the Journal, creating The Boardcaster in 1960, and sending out House and Senate Loggers to keep members apprised of which bills were being submitted about education.

He knew that the state held great sway on what board members could do, and advocacy needed to be part of the job of the Association – and every board member.

Wettergren remains the longest-serving executive director in MSBA’s history with 33 years of service. Wettergren died in 1992 after suffering a heart attack at age 75.

**Stepping Out**

First Woman to Head MSBA Knew the Power of Education

*By Dan Linehan, Special writer for the MSBA Journal*

Ursula Christofferson believed every woman should have the education and skills to make a living for herself.

Coming of age at a time when women could not vote, she sought leadership roles long reserved for men. Christofferson ran for a seat in the Minnesota Legislature, which at that time held not a single woman.

In 1943, she became the first woman to serve as president of MSBA.

In addition to being treasurer of the White Bear Lake School Board for 25 years, Christofferson put her intelligence and leadership skills to work for a bevy of civic groups. She was president of the White Bear Lake Women’s Club and the Minnesota Federation of Women’s Clubs, among others.

Christofferson was also in many ways a traditional woman of her time, her granddaughter, Carrie Handy, says. She believed in self-sufficiency, but thought of it as a fall-back position in the absence of marriage, Handy says.

Christofferson found plenty of meaning outside both the home and workplace, especially during her two-year tenure as MSBA president.

Another of her eight grandchildren, Clyde Christofferson, says his grandmother “spoke fondly of having been in office with the Minnesota School Boards Association.”

Later in life, after joining her son’s family in their move out West, Christofferson spent eight years as a school secretary in Redondo Beach, Calif. Upon her retirement, she was honored with a lifetime achievement pin from the PTA, along with a touching tribute.
A poem about her life — inspired by a then-popular TV show “This is Your Life” — was written and performed. After describing her early home life, it chronicled her time as an educational leader.

She was picked for the School Board
In her own home town
But ‘twas just the beginning,
For she gained renown

Christofferson was first appointed to the school board in White Bear Lake, a St. Paul suburb, in 1927 to fill out another member’s unfinished term. But she would go on to win elections in her own right. In one race, she ran against what a newspaper described as the “taxpayer’s association candidate,” defeating him 179 votes to 108.

She also earned the respect of White Bear Lake School Supt. Harold Bauer, who wrote, “Your leadership, great forward thinking, courage and tireless energy has been an inspiration to all of us.”

She went from the city
Through county to state
Where she became “Prexy”
And well filled the slate.

Her remarks at MSBA’s 1946 convention, where she delivered the legislative report, suggest she valued equity of educational opportunity. As part of a delegation that toured Minnesota, Christofferson argued in favor of a distribution of state aid that would afford an “equal educational opportunity” to each child.

She also spoke about playing defense at the Legislature and about using the country’s post-war prosperity to invest in education.

“It did not seem that much was accomplished,” she said of the 1945 session, “But I do believe we came away with a feeling of gratitude realizing the situation might have been really disastrous as there were such strong efforts to cut the tax rates at a time when incomes were the highest ever known in our state.”

There she rubbed elbows
With statesmen and such
But our girl couldn’t lose
The good common touch.

The records she left behind serve as a reminder of how married women were seen as extensions of their husbands, especially in the public sphere. Even the campaign flyer for her legislative run described her as “Mrs. F. N. (Ursula) Christofferson.”

She lost that four-way race, incidentally, though she received nearly 7,000 votes.

She did her good
In her sweet charming way
And even came out
To Califom I A

Clyde Christofferson’s first memory of his grandparents is in their White Bear Lake home, but his family, then living in Baltimore, soon moved west. When he was seven, in 1951, his father was hired as a test pilot for Los Angeles-based Northrop Corporation.

“We took a long trip, first to White Bear Lake to pick up Grandma and Frank, and we caravanned together to California,” he said.

Ursula and Frank lived in a Redondo Beach apartment a few blocks from the ocean. Frank died in 1954 in his wife’s arms, Clyde Christofferson said. He remembers going to the funeral, but a series of moves, eventually to St. Louis in 1955, meant he didn’t see her as often after.

Ursula Christofferson eventually moved to Leisure World, the country’s first major planned retirement community, just south of Los Angeles. She died in 1986 at the age of 89.

In Ursula Christofferson’s writing and in the memories of her grandchildren, the value of education stands out as one of her core values. The poem touches on the emphasis Christofferson placed on education, especially for her children.

She didn’t think lightly
On their education
Which turned out for her
A real life dedication

Christofferson is quoted in a newspaper saying that young people who can’t make up their mind about a vocation should pursue a generalized education first and specialize later.

“But every girl should prepare herself to earn a living somehow,” she said.

Her only daughter, also named Ursula, earned a college degree at a time when higher education was out of reach for most women.

Of her grandmother, Handy said, “I’m sure in another era she would’ve had a career. She was definitely a very bright woman and very ambitious.”

She was warm, too.

MSBA would like to thank the White Bear Lake Area Historical Society for its invaluable assistance in providing information for this story.
Back in the 1890s, teachers knew that if a child came to school without a lunch, they weren’t going to learn much that afternoon.

A few welfare groups on the East Coast started the first school lunch programs in Boston and Philadelphia. The results were indisputable: a student who is fed is a student who is ready to learn.

A lunch program in Minneapolis in 1903 may have been the earliest. Another early program originated a year later in Clark’s Grove, Minnesota, with children bringing a portion of their lunch from home in mason jars. These jars of lunch (warmed in a kettle of hot water just before lunchtime), combined with a hot dish prepared by the teacher, were one of several unsophisticated but significant beginnings in school-sponsored meals.

University of Minnesota nutritionist Inez Hobart established a breakfast program in a Minneapolis school, called “penny breakfast.” School administrators noticed that a large number of mothers employed as cleaning women at office buildings did not return home early enough to prepare breakfast. That sparked the program.

It took decades before the government became involved. When the Great Depression hit, part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal created school lunch programs as a win-win-win. First, it purchased surplus food from farmers; second, it employed people as school cooks; and third, it fed students who were in poverty.

Movement also grew for a national school lunch program because when the United States started to recruit teens for World War I, one out of three candidates were rejected because of malnutrition or being undernourished as a child.

But with wars breaking out in the 1940s, the War Food Administration was the main impetus behind trying to help communities start school lunch programs. It wasn’t until 1946 when pressure grew for a federal program, and Congress passed the National School Lunch Act. School lunches were now nationwide. Recipes were made to feed 100 children at a time, such as Liver Loaf – meatloaf, but made with 20 pounds of boiled liver and a quart of catsup.

And the dress and conduct code for school lunch workers? Hair net, clean uniform, smooth pantyhose, sensible heels, straight seams, and hygiene suggestions such as: no body odor, daily bath, don’t chew gum, or smoke or wear excessive make-up and jewelry.

The Child Nutrition Act of 1966 added more subsidies for low-income children (including the start of free and reduced-priced meals), a school milk program and a school breakfast program. Two years later, a Summer Food Service Program was added.

Minnesota started its own reimbursement for lunch in 1977, paying 4 cents for each meal served.

In 1981, President Reagan slashed the federal school lunch program by $1.5 billion by reducing who was eligible, shrinking meal portions, and skirting nutrition requirements (by doing things like declaring catsup was a vegetable).

In 2010, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which overhauled school meals to meet higher nutrition standards. The Trump Administration loosened the rules a bit by allowing things such as flavored milk, more time to meet sodium guidelines, and the ability to offer grains that were not 100% whole grain.

In Minnesota today, there are 96 million lunches served during the school year (2017-18), and another 37.5 million breakfasts.

“School meals matter,” said Minnesota Department of Education School Nutrition Program Supervisor Deb Lukkonen. “For over 70 years, school meals have been a critical contribution to both the health and academic success of students. Well-nourished kids are ready to learn, do better in class and are ready to meet new challenges.”

Greg Abbott is the Communications Director for MSBA. Debra Lukkonen is the School Nutrition Program Supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Education.
A Convergence of Hopes and Dreams: Brown v Board of Education

By Helen J.M. Bassett

According to historical records, Kenneth Estell writes “In 1952, five different cases, all dealing with segregation in public schools, but with different facts and from different places, reached the Supreme Court. Four of the cases, Brown v Board of Education of Topeka (Kansas), Briggs v Elliott (South Carolina), Davis v Prince Edward County School Board (Virginia), and Gebhardt v Belton (Delaware) were considered together.”

The court ruled that states could not establish racial segregation in public schools. Separate was NOT equal. The persistence represented by these continued challenges focused on a fair and equal education for African American (black) children. The cases demonstrate how deeply rooted the desire for knowledge was, and parents’ hopes for purpose-filled living through education. Those hopes lit the way for the judiciary to uphold the principles of equity and parity. Parental dreams converged with the court to pave the way for children who arguably had no universal means to achieve the promise of consistent equal education under the law. The original Supreme Court ruling in 1954 and Brown II in 1955 set the stage for just such a universal vehicle to lift educational aspirations for African American children.

MY STORY

Little did I know that my personal story would echo back to the Brown v Board of Education ruling, and my parents’ unique meeting would undergird my pursuit and love of public education.

A yearbook photo shows my mother, Carrie Ford McMickle, who served as class president for her small high school, Jasper County Agricultural High School, in 1944, in rural Mississippi. After graduation, she entered Mississippi’s Jackson State University to become a teacher. Illness prevented her graduating college, but that did not prevent her from becoming a rural teacher of a mixed-age and gender class in a one-room school house in another rural Mississippi community near her hometown.

By the time I entered first grade, at age 5 (an October birthday allowed me to sneak in a bit early), life found our family in northern Illinois and I was poised to enter kindergarten, totally unaware of the seismic Brown v Board of Education ruling that paved my way. When I entered elementary school, it was integrated. I was buffered, to an extent, from the turmoil evidenced in the deep South that was witnessed and lived by so many, before 1955 and afterwards.

Whether a one-room cabin in the Mississippi Delta, or located on farmland elsewhere, at least one other common characteristic existed during and before the 19th century – separate and unequal education. Small class sizes with multi-aged and racially segregated students were often the norm in southern rural settings.

Jonathan Kozol’s book, “The Shame of a Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America,” provides insight on how American educational systems were failing students of color. Kozol reminds us of the extremely varying educational experiences encountered by students across the U.S., and points out that segregated schooling is deeply problematic in many ways. “For African-Americans to have equal opportunity, higher test scores will not suffice. It is foolhardy to think black children can be taught, no matter how well, in isolation and then have the skills and confidence as adults to succeed in a white world where they have no experience.” [Kozol, 2005, p.229]

His writing provides insight and conclusions resulting from him personally visiting the schools during his 40-year career in education, working with children. Contrast his comments below with the unique charm of the Angle Inlet School.

In one makeshift elementary school housed in a former skating rink next to a funeral parlor in another nearly all black-and-Hispanic section of the Bronx, class size rose to 34 and more; four kindergarten classes and a sixth-grade class were packed into a single room that had no windows. Airlessness was stifling in many rooms; and recess was impossible because there was no outdoor gym; so, the children had no place to play.

MINNESOTA AND U.S. EDUCATION POLICY

Between the 1950s and 1970s, Minnesota enacted several pieces of legislation that have helped to shape public education. The so-called Minnesota Miracle of 1971 restructured the funding mechanism for public schools, reforms which lasted for over 30 years. 

The one-room schoolhouses in the segregation years were nothing like more modern schools for white children.
As Kant said: “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.” (p. 137). I also understand that human dignity has intrinsic worth above all else, and it would follow that our actions toward one another should embody those ideals. The practical value of a shared social contract adds even more power to efforts on behalf of the collective good.

THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, 1548 is the year in which the phrase “public schools” was first used and soon defined as a “free tax-supported school controlled by a local governmental authority.” (See Chart A) Public education became compulsory in 1852. Popular acceptance of the value and necessity of education over the next several hundred years provided a stark contrast between the closed society of the educated privileged of earlier centuries.

One of the first known laws passed to make teaching reading to the enslaved was passed in South Carolina in 1740.

Chart B provides context for the evolution of public education in America. Roughly 300 years passed between the first U.S. public school and the Brown decision.

The promise of Brown v Board has experienced a slow erosion of will and dismantling of rulings across the country where educational reforms supporting integration were tried. A slow and steady retreat from the vision of equal educational experiences has persisted. There are many perceptions about why this has occurred. According to Richard Dufour, “If we do not change our way of thinking about public education, the United States could continue to lose ground economically to the rest of the world” (2009, p. xix).
The barrier of segregated neighborhoods and associated schools is significant when students of color are locked into substandard schools across the country. According to Dufour, “we must decide whether we will allow ourselves to become more fractured socially and economically, or whether we will invest in ideas to bring us together” (p. xix).

“Integrated education creates better citizens for a democracy. In an increasingly diverse society and an increasingly connected world, it is more important than ever was” (Roger Wilkins).\(^\text{v}\)

**EPILOGUE**

I am aware that many in the African American community, as well as others not so situated, believe that the separate lives of the deep South – which produced somewhat homogenous communities of African Americans who nurtured each other, where prosperous black professionals such as the teacher, banker, doctor, and maid co-existed – produced a richer protective community. Often the question arises that asks, If left to their own devices, were we not better off?

I do not mean to discount the intrinsic value of beloved community and the protective factors of what I will call “tribal living.” I do believe that important resiliency exists in such a venue. However, the global marketplace has many demands. Comingling the experiences of students in the classrooms enriches the level of understanding of cultural differences and nuance, especially in educational settings. A richer learning environment emerges and opportunities for academic and social-emotional growth are increased.

I find the convergence of hopes and dreams within my beliefs. It is the same sense of convergence that propelled me into service on my local school board and continues to fuel my passion for public service. I believe in a high quality, integrated and fulsome publicly funded education for all children. This is especially true for children with special circumstances such as poverty, impaired abilities, trauma, and/or racial isolation. Those children need our collective will to fuel their hopes, dreams, and potential. I appreciate the invitation to reflect on Brown v Board of Education, as it has provided me with a moment that is personal, yet woven tightly with the evolution of integrated schooling in America from the segregated South my parents fled for the sake of our family, especially for me and my siblings. Our story mirrors that of so many other African Americans and Americans in general who lived through these times. Tides ebb and flow. It is up to us all to ensure that we continue to ride the crest of each wave and to protect the shores of our country and our collective good from erosion that will surely set in, should we not move with deliberate speed to protect it.

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This article includes major excerpts from an academic paper written by this author: A Desensitized Society: Attitudes and Perceptions Affecting Public Education (Bassett, 2017).

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The Dreaded Era of Testing Begins

In 1929, some college professors thought it would be fun to put together a test for high school students and sponsor the Iowa Academic Meet. That little competition grew into the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, given to all students in Iowa who were in grades six through eight, starting in 1935. In the years that followed, other states jumped on the testing bandwagon, including Minnesota. State officials don’t have exact records of when Minnesota schools started using the Iowa Basic Skills Test; but estimated schools started to use the test in the late 1950s.

College testing had a longer history. In 1899, the College Entrance Examination Board was founded with members from 12 Ivy League colleges in the East. Their version of a college entrance test evolved into the Scholastic Aptitude Test, first given in 1926. After nearly 30 years of using the SAT, other colleges thought a more general college test should be given that wasn’t restricted to the East Coast colleges. In 1959, the American College Testing Program was launched. It soon overtook the SAT as the main college entrance exam used by high school seniors.

The Iowa Basic Skills Test eventually gave way to the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) in the mid 1990s, which were redone to meet standards in the test-crazy No Child Left Behind era. But we’ll leave that for the 2000-2020 edition.
For every student’s celebration.