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By the time this article is published and delivered to you, we will be closing in on the end of 2020. What a year we have all experienced. A year ago, none of us would have ever imagined the challenges we are facing as board members, school administrators, and educators. We could never have predicted that we would be offering “hybrid” models of learning and reimagining how we operate as districts.

I was quite astounded to learn that out of the approximately 2,150 state board members, there will be approximately 420 to 450 new members elected to fill seats on their local board. That means that almost one in five board member seats will change.

As we welcome new members to our boards, change may not be easy and the dynamics of how your board functions could change dramatically. In addition, with the unknowns of how the pandemic may affect how our schools function and with all the social issues facing us, being a school board member today is not for the faint of heart. More than ever, we will need to support one another, work together, welcome and mentor our new members, and always keep our students in the forefront of every decision we make.

For those of you who are retiring from your board, or have decided to step aside and allow someone else to serve, or have been unseated by another candidate, thank you. Thank you for being brave enough to put yourself out there and to serve your local families. My hope is that local boards will take time at their December meetings to acknowledge and properly thank members whose terms will end on December 31, 2020. They certainly deserve accolades.

How can continuing board members welcome and support our newly elected members? The learning curve for new members is high. I am sure we can all remember our first meeting as a new board member. We had, and still do have, so much to learn. Many foreign acronyms and terms were used casually by seasoned board members and staff. Learning about school finance was overwhelming. As issues arose and parents/community members contacted us expecting us to “fix” the problem to suit their wants, we may have thought, “What did I get myself in to?” Fortunately, MSBA offers many helpful tools for us to use.

Assigning a seasoned board member as a mentor is one of the first tasks your board chair should do. Invite the new member to meet with your superintendent and the board chair, or mentor, to learn about the district and the important role they will serve. Personal interaction is most helpful. Highlight the mission, goals, and role of the school board. MSBA has an especially useful “New Board Member Orientation Year At-a-Glance” document and checklist which clearly goes through orientation prior to the first meeting, as well as what to expect in the first year. Lay out clear ground rules. Prioritize the importance of having a board that can trust each other and work together. I recommend that you have newly elected members become familiar with the MSBA website, the Weekly Advocate emails, and the eClippings. Have another board member(s) attend MSBA’s Phase trainings with the new member(s). Continue to be a learner along with the new members and participate in the many offerings of MSBA that help us become better board members.

Navigating board dynamics is of utmost importance. Each member brings unique and special gifts that they can contribute at the table. As your board welcomes a new member(s), look for their strengths and utilize those strengths. Maximizing the diverse backgrounds, talents, and perspectives each member brings to the board will make your board a more productive, cohesive, and successful team. The strength of your board will trickle down to the achievements of your students and district. I wish your boards a great 2021 and strong teamwork with your fellow board members. Together we can make a positive difference in the lives of our students.

Deborah Pauly is MSBA President and a Jordan School Board Member. She can be contacted at dpauly@isd717.org.
MSBA thanks art instructors Tyler Mans and Laura Strand and their Pine City High School students for sharing their art in this issue.

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We Heard You, Loud and Clear . . . PIVOT!

MSBA planning three-day virtual Leadership Conference in January 2021 based on member survey

By Kirk Schneidawind, MSBA Executive Director

MSBA gathered your feedback in August, when a survey was sent to the entire membership, and your message was loud and clear. While you want to attend the MSBA Leadership Conference in-person, due to a variety of health and safety reasons, more than half of you do not feel an in-person 2021 MSBA Leadership Conference is a viable option.

“It is all about optics and preventing further spread of transmission. This will help us keep kids in school.” – MSBA member

Your MSBA is working with our hotel and convention center partners to come to a reasonable agreement and to identify solutions for the 2021 Leadership Conference.

The health and safety of the membership, staff, exhibitors, and your communities are what is most important. So, this year we are going to “PIVOT!” We are working on plans to provide valuable information and learning opportunities to you, no matter your choice of location. Some of you may choose an option to attend virtually as a school board, others...
will choose their back office, living room, desk, kitchen table, or even their couch. No matter the format or location, you will experience keynote speakers, round tables, workshops, skills sessions, local school district student talent, and social opportunities, as well.

Nothing can replace being in-person, learning with and from one another. Like you, we are adapting, we are being creative, and we are excited for this opportunity to “PIVOT!” and explore all the options.

The survey also told us you value evenings and weekends with your families and away from technology. When we asked what day and time you would like to attend virtually, again the membership was very clear on their preference: Thursday mornings. We will hold the conference in a virtual setting from 9 a.m. to noon on January 14, January 21, and January 28, 2021, on three consecutive Thursday mornings. We are also exploring whether we will be able to record sessions and make them available the weekend following the presentation. Final details will soon be posted to our website and communicated to you in numerous ways.

“Thank you for continuing to figure out ways to provide content to member districts through this odd time.” – MSBA member

This is an “odd time,” indeed! The MSBA Leadership Conference 2021 will look different, but our goal of delivering an outstanding and high-quality learning experience has not changed. Who knows what conferences will look like in 2022? Our hopes and plans for future Leadership Conferences are to bring the event back in-person – and better than ever!

Kirk Schneidawind is the MSBA Executive Director. Contact Kirk at kschneidawind@mnmsba.org.
School board members can help shape the future of education by participating in the LeaF initiative

By Katie King and Lucy Payne

We each have a role in shaping the future of learning, but in an increasingly complex world characterized by rapid change, considering how we might influence the future can be difficult. That’s why MSBA has joined with the University of St. Thomas and KnowledgeWorks in Leading for the Future (LeaF) Series. It is designed to equip Minnesota school board members with tools and mindsets of futures thinking, which can help them consider multiple possibilities and lead amid uncertainty.

A cohort of 15 to 20 participants from across the state will work together to think critically and creatively about the future and to apply a future-oriented lens to policy development and analysis.
Interested school board members can complete the application by December 1 at https://tinyurl.com/LeafSeries2020. Virtual learning sessions will begin in January. Application questions include:

- Your hope for education in the future in your community.
- How your experience shapes the way you lead as a school board member.
- What issue will be important to the future of learning in your community.

Members will participate in 10 two-hour virtual learning sessions throughout 2021, complete reading, reflection and brief online discussions. The members will also commit to holding conversations with local stakeholders, so the total time commitment will be about four hours a month. Members who have completed the MSBA Phase School Board Member Workshop Series will be given selection priority.

Staff from KnowledgeWorks and the University of St. Thomas will be facilitating the sessions.

Creating meaningful change in education requires participation from a broad group of stakeholders. By engaging a network of thought partners, or people with whom participants can share insights about the future in their local communities, cohort members will be creating new avenues for community engagement and shared ownership. Series facilitators will guide cohort members on how to best curate their network in the first session, and cohort members will have time and support in selecting individuals to be part of their networks. Applicants should be interested in making change, connecting with other board members, and deepening local relationships while supporting policies for student-centered learning.

We all make assumptions about what the future will be like. Often without realizing it, we assume it will unfold in a predictable and linear way. By doing that, we limit our creative and innovative leadership capacity. Futures thinking enables us to examine our assumptions about the future and better understand how the changes that are happening today could affect our communities years from now.

With the help of futures thinking, we can find ways to pursue our visions while grappling with the inherent uncertainty of the future. Ultimately, exploring the future is an act of stewardship to our future communities and to the young people who will live in them.

For questions about the content of the series, please contact Katie King, Director of Strategic Foresight Engagement at KnowledgeWorks at kingk@knowledgeworks.org. For questions about the application process or more detail on how the series can benefit school board members, please contact Lucy Payne, Associate Professor at University of St. Thomas and Mahtomedi School Board Chair at llpayne@stthomas.edu.
For years, public schools in Minnesota have been dabbling in distance education, largely through asynchronous online learning. For nearly as long, broadband advocates across the state and nation have been touting the need for high-speed, affordable broadband to assure that all Americans can fully participate in initiatives around distance education, tele-health, work-at-home, aging in place, and others. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has proven that this broadband access is of paramount importance in our efforts to provide a high-quality education to all students. Districts will have students utilizing distance learning throughout the 2020-2021 school year whether by choice or by circumstance as the virus forces decisions to adopt a hybrid or full distance learning model. There is no part of the state that is currently immune to the broadband issue, whether it is a lack of options for service or affordability. In the paragraphs that follow, I will highlight some of the problems we face and solutions that districts are employing. While I focus on the districts that are members of the ECMECC cooperative, similar issues and solutions can be found all across the state.

Too many students don’t have adequate internet access

According to statistics provided by the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development, eight of ECMECC’s 14 member school districts have more than 20% of their households without wired broadband that meets current state goals for speeds. Two of them have more than half of their households without this access. The same data suggests this number holds true across all of greater Minnesota. That’s a significant population of our students, and that does not take into account those who cannot afford the services. ECMECC’s own survey data corroborates this, indicating that we have nearly 25% of our students who lack the access they need to fully participate in digital distance learning. That’s more than 9,000 students in ECMECC districts alone.
Upload speeds make the difference

At this point, I know that some of you might be thinking that you surveyed your families and nearly every one of them said they have internet access, and that might be accurate if the only question was some derivation of, “Do you have internet access?” It is important, however, to dig a little deeper. Most families have at least one smartphone on a cellular data plan. They have internet access. Even those households that don’t meet the minimum speed goals might have internet access, but at substandard speeds that hamper their distance learning efforts. This is important because the upload speed that a student has available to them is the most important determination in their success with distance learning, and the current state speed goal includes a 3Mbps upload speed. 3Mbps is a minimum upload rate to fully participate in a group video conference call. So, while there are a significant number of households who meet the minimum goals, if the household has more than one student participating in distance learning, or a household member trying to work from home, they may still experience frustrations trying to participate. It is important that districts survey families about the actual experience of distance learning so that barriers can be identified and solutions put in place so all families can be successful.

Hotspots are not always the silver bullet

In response to these issues, districts have used a number of strategies. Cellular hotspots have been the most common solution used by many districts, and this can be a worthy solution in those instances where cell coverage is solid, but there are a number of issues that can accompany these devices, as well. Indoor reception can be affected by geography, building materials, and other obstructions. This will most commonly influence the all-important upload speed. Data caps can create problems where video is important in the distance learning plan, and multiple users can quickly saturate the bandwidth available on these devices. Again, districts should follow up with those students and families where hotspots have been deployed to make sure they are working effectively.

Distance Learning Academy sites

Schools and libraries have, in some cases, added wireless access points in outdoor areas around their buildings and campuses and even parked busses with wireless access in strategic locations for drive-up access. The North Branch Area School District has rented space in a former retail location to be used as a distance learning academy site where students can come for broadband access and assistance delivered in a safe and healthy manner. Many library branches have put Wi-Fi access points in places that allow for access from their parking lots, and some have opened for after-school and evening hours for limited numbers of students to work in meeting rooms and open areas. Requiring parents and/or students to drive to locations to get access is not ideal and is a barrier for many. Additionally, as the weather gets colder, drive-up solutions become even less effective. For students who have no other options, districts should look for partnerships with libraries, nonprofit organizations, and other entities to provide options for indoor access that can be provided in a safe manner.
Keep internet costs affordable

On the affordability side of this equation, many providers participate in the federal lifeline program that provides discounted broadband services to families who meet income eligibility requirements. Additionally, many providers have developed low cost service plans that they are offering to any family. Districts should check with their providers to see who is offering various services to help with affordability. When doing so, make sure that the service they are providing meets the minimum upload requirement of 3Mbps (more is better!). If it does not meet that upload speed, the students are more likely to have a frustrating experience.

The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development (OBD) has an interactive map, where users can enter an address to know which providers may offer service in their area, at https://bit.ly/MN-broadband-map. The OBD also provides a spreadsheet, showing all providers who serve each school district in the state, at https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/maps/data.jsp.

Education Superhighway maintains the K-12 Digital Bridge website, at https://digitalbridgek12.org/k-12-bridge-to-broadband-program, that has information to help schools, districts, and states. Included are options to enter an address to find which providers offer lifeline services and other discounted services for families.

All Minnesota districts have distance learners, and it is our responsibility to make sure they are successful. If the right questions are asked to identify barriers and the best solutions are put into place, every learner has a great chance to succeed. In an attempt to bring this all together in a focused effort, beginning in October, ECMECC member districts will start a digital navigator program. This program will have identified staff who, through assessment activities and referrals from teachers, will assist families in finding broadband options and overcoming other barriers to effective distance learning. This program is made possible, in part, through a generous grant from the Partnership for a Connected Minnesota (http://connectedmn.us).

We are also partnering with the East Central Regional Library system to train library personnel who will be available to families and other community members during afterschool and evening hours. The goal of this program is to support families in all areas of distance and digital learning, including having tools such as devices and broadband access available to them. For more information, please visit https://ecmecc.org/dnp and contact us with any questions.

Marc Johnson is the executive director of the East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (ECMECC), a joint-powers organization owned and operated by 14 Minnesota school districts and Pine Technical & Community College. ECMECC provides distance learning, network, cybersecurity, and classroom technology services. ECMECC’s fiber-based, wide area network supports interactive video programming that expands educational opportunities in music, arts and culture, STEM, healthcare, business, world languages, dual credit courses, and additional college, career, and technical programs. Marc is a longtime advocate for improved rural broadband opportunities. In October 2019, Marc was appointed by Governor Tim Walz to the governor’s Broadband Task Force. Marc can be reached at mjohnson@ecmecc.org.
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Your Minnesota School Boards Association Board of Directors has undertaken a review of the Association’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws over the last year. Each nonprofit in the state of Minnesota is required to adopt Articles and Bylaws to establish their core purpose, governance structure, and membership. In short, our Articles of Incorporation establish the blueprint for the organization, while the Bylaws help shape and define what the structure of the organization will look like.

The goal of the Ad Hoc Bylaws and Policy Committee was to review each of the documents, the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws, with the goal of preparing MSBA for today and the future. Before the MSBA Board acted on the changes, they sought legal review of both documents.

Because MSBA is an Association whose authority comes from and through its members and Board of Directors, it is important that we inform you of these changes. Not only is this a good thing to do, but an essential thing to do since you, as a representative of the Association, will vote on the proposed changes at the MSBA Business Meeting, which will be held during the 2021 Leadership Conference. Like any vote that you take, you should be informed of the topics and issues.

A summary of the changes accompanies this article, including a number of amendments to the language. Some sections have simply been moved to enhance the flow of each document. We have included a link to the red-lined version of the documents so that the membership can view the changes that have been approved by the committee.
and MSBA Board of Directors. In addition, a link is provided to the final draft, absent the red-lined changes. Each of these documents will remain on the MSBA website for your viewing at www.mnmsba.org/AboutMSBA.

Some of the highlights:

**Articles of Incorporation**

- Expanded and clarified the purpose of the Corporation, the Minnesota School Boards Association.
- Changed the registered office of the Corporation to 1900 West Jefferson Avenue, St. Peter, Minnesota from St. Paul, Minnesota.
- Authorizes that the Board of Directors may amend, restate, or repeal parts of the Articles of Incorporation upon the affirmative vote of two thirds (2/3) of all Directors of the Corporation.

**Bylaws**

- Clarified that members are any school board of any dues-paying public school district in the state of Minnesota.
- Clarified that the elected or appointed individuals serving on each member school board shall be deemed representatives of the school board, but no member school board may have more than seven (7) representatives when voting on questions coming before such meetings, including the selection of the District Director.
- Moved the due date for payment of membership dues from November 15 to August 15 of each year.
- Increased the quorum from 50 to 100 representatives for the transaction of business at the Business meeting of the Association.

View the redlined version of the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws at http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/ProposedArticlesBylawsRedlined2021.pdf.

View a clean version of the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws at http://www.mnmsba.org/Portals/0/ProposedArticlesBylaws2021.pdf.

Kirk Schneidawind is the MSBA Executive Director. Kirk can be contacted at kschneidawind@mnmsba.org.

Please see Pages 20-21 for a Summary of the Revised MSBA Articles of Incorporation & Bylaws.
# Summary of the Revised MSBA Articles of Incorporation & Bylaws

## Articles of Incorporation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Document</th>
<th>Titles added to the individual Articles. Document formatted as a basic constitution and duplication between Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws removed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>Restated to reflect amendments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article I – NAME</td>
<td>Establishes the name of the Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article II – PURPOSE</td>
<td>First paragraph contains content from IRS code 501(c)(4). Following points (a)-(i) further lay out the purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article III – TAX EXEMPT STATUS</td>
<td>This new language is required by IRS to maintain our tax exempt status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article IV – DURATION</td>
<td>States the existence of the Corporation shall be perpetual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article V – REGISTERED OFFICE</td>
<td>Establishes the current address as 1900 West Jefferson Avenue, St. Peter, Minnesota.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article VI – SHARES</td>
<td>States that the Corporation is not authorized to issue shares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article VII – MEMBERS</td>
<td>Establishes that the Corporation shall have members with voting rights. New language moves the rules of membership to the Bylaws – Article II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article VIII – BOARD OF DIRECTORS</td>
<td>States that the property, affairs, and business of the Corporation shall be managed by its Board of Directors. New language deletes specific term language and moves the rules of the Board of Directors to the Bylaws – Article V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIGINAL Articles IX &amp; X</td>
<td>Original Article IX, Area Groups and Director Districts, has been moved to Bylaws - Article V-Section 3, and Article VIII. Original Article X, Delegate Assembly, has been moved to Bylaws - Article IX.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article IX – PERSONAL LIABILITY</td>
<td>This new language states that no officer, director, or member of this Corporation shall be personally liable for the debts of obligations of this Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article X – DISSOLUTION</td>
<td>This new language is required for any tax exempt Corporation and establishes the process to be followed if the Corporation is dissolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article XI – AMENDMENT OF THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION</td>
<td>This new language gives the authority to amend the Articles of Incorporation to the Board by a 2/3 vote. Among other associations, this is a common practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Bylaws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article I – OFFICES; CORPORATE SEAL</th>
<th>Section 1. The registered office of the Corporation is as stated in the Articles of Incorporation. Section 2. The Corporation may have other such offices, as determined by the Board of Directors. Section 3. The Corporation shall not have a corporate seal.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles II – MEMBERS</td>
<td>Section 1. Any school board of any public school district in Minnesota may become a member by payment of annual membership dues. Section 2. Establishes the difference between “member” (dues-paying school board) and “representative” (individual on the school board who has voting rights). States that a “member” shall be entitled to no more than seven (7) representatives at meetings of the Corporation and no “representative” shall have more than one vote. Section 3. Officers and Directors of the Corporation no longer on their local school boards shall continue on the MSBA Board until replaced as provided in the Bylaws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article III – FISCAL YEAR; DUES AND OTHER FEES; AUDIT</td>
<td>Section 1. The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year. Section 2. The amount of membership dues shall be set by the Board of Directors, which may also establish other annual or periodic fees to be charged to individuals, entities, or organizations. Section 3. Any school board which fails to pay its membership dues by August 15 of any year shall immediately cease to be a member of the Corporation and shall lose its rights and powers as a member. Section 4. The records and books of account of the Corporation shall be audited at least once in each fiscal year. The audit shall be furnished to members at each annual meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article IV – MEETINGS OF MEMBERS</td>
<td>Section 1. The annual meeting of the members of the corporation shall be held at a time and place designated by the Board of Directors. Notice shall be delivered at least 30 days in advance of the meeting. Section 2. Establishes rules for calling and giving notice of special meetings. Section 3. Requires no less than 100 representatives to constitute a quorum for the transaction of any Corporation business and establishes procedure if a quorum is not met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Article V – BOARD OF DIRECTORS | Section 1. Defines the composition of the Board of Directors.  
Section 2. Establishes the manner of election and term of office for each District Director.  
Section 3. Specifies the Area composition of each Director District.  
Section 4. Details the procedure for Director District elections.  
Section 5. States that the property, affairs, and business of the Corporation shall be managed by the Board of Directors.  
Section 6. The Board of Directors shall hold regular meetings at least four times per year, and eight directors present shall constitute a quorum.  
Section 7. Details rules for calling special meetings.  
Section 8. Specifies who shall chair meetings and who shall be Secretary.  
Section 9. Any Director may be removed, with or without cause, by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the Directors not subject to the removal vote at a meeting called for that purpose.  
Section 10. A Director may resign at any time by giving written notice to the President.  
Section 11. Establishes rules for filling vacancies.  
Section 12. Directors who are present at a meeting are deemed to have received notice.  
Section 13. Addresses the creation of Board committees. |
| Article VI – OFFICERS | Section 1. Details the election of officers and their terms of office.  
Section 1a. Specifies the procedure for election of the President-Elect.  
Section 2. Duties of the President are identified.  
Section 3. Duties of the President-Elect or Immediate Past President are identified.  
Section 4. Duties of the Treasurer are identified.  
Section 5. Any officer may be removed, with or without cause, by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the Board of Directors at a meeting called for that purpose.  
Section 6. Any officer may resign at any time by giving written notice, and the resignation shall take effect either when specified or upon receipt by the President.  
Section 7. Details the filling of vacancies.  
Section 8. All Past Presidents and other designees become honorary members of the Corporation without voting rights. |
| Article VII – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Details the term of appointment and responsibilities of the Executive Director. |
| Article VIII – AREA GROUPS | Section 1. Lists the configuration of districts within each Area Group.  
Section 1a. A member school district may change Area Group (within its Director District) and the Bylaws shall be amended upon Board approval.  
Section 2. District Directors shall be the Chairs of the Area Groups within their Director Districts at meetings held at places and times designated by the Board of Directors.  
Section 3. Representatives of each member school district may attend meetings of their respective Area Groups and are entitled to one vote on each question coming before the meeting. |
| Article IX – DELEGATE ASSEMBLY | Section 1, Subd. 1. The Corporation shall have an annual Delegate Assembly and delegates shall be representatives of a member district.  
Section 1, Subd. 2. Language clarifies the assignment of delegates to each Area Group.  
Section 1, Subd. 3. In each odd year, delegates shall be assigned to Area Groups using enrollment information available from the Minnesota Department of Education.  
Section 2, Subd. 1. Each Area Group shall elect delegates for two-year terms in the odd year by mail or internet ballot.  
Section 2, Subd. 2. Clarifies election/selection of alternates.  
Section 2, Subd. 3. The Executive Director shall prepare procedures for election of delegates and alternates.  
Section 3. The Delegate Assembly shall meet once a year and notice of time and place shall be sent to each member at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.  
Section 4. The Corporation shall reimburse reasonable expenses to Delegate Assembly members for meeting attendance.  
Section 5. Fifty delegates present shall constitute a quorum.  
Section 6. The Delegate Assembly shall study, formulate, and adopt proposals for consideration and enactment. |
| Article X – FINANCIAL MATTERS | Section 1. Specifies execution of contracts.  
Section 2. No loans shall be contracted on behalf of the Corporation and no negotiable paper shall be issued in its name unless authorized by the Board of Directors.  
Section 3. Checks, drafts, or other orders for payment shall be signed by such person or persons designated by the Board of Directors.  
Section 4. Funds to the credit of the Corporation shall be deposited in banks, trust companies, or other depositories by a designated Corporation officer or employee. |
| Article XI – AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS | Bylaws may be amended, repealed, or adopted by the vote of a simple majority of the representatives of the Corporation. All proposed amendments must be submitted for review and approval at least 60 days prior to the annual meeting and take effect upon adoption by the representatives at the annual meeting. |
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Considering what education will look like 40 years from now is a daunting task. While taking an optimistic approach, I also understand that history tends to repeat itself. By way of example, The Washington Post published a story in April 2020 revisiting how the Chicago Public Schools handled school closures due to a polio epidemic in 1937.

The article highlights how the school district used the latest technology – the radio – to deliver instruction during the closure. While the program was visionary, well managed, and exciting for many, there were also flaws such as inequitable access to radio sets. Some families had multiple radios, enough for every child in their family, while others struggled to share one radio if they had it at all.

Replace radio with “device” or “internet access” and we have a startlingly similar situation to what we had during emergency distance learning at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. There were also concerns about how the “one size fits all” lessons impacted struggling learners. Again, sounds familiar, doesn’t it? As educators, we should be well-positioned to learn from past experiences to forge a better road ahead. We need to continue embracing that education is first and foremost about relationships and then apply the latest research and practices to continuously improve our vocation.

So, as an amateur futurist, what do I think education will look like in 2060?
The achievement gap
Most importantly, the achievement gap, as we know it, will be a thing of the past. New gaps will emerge and there will be a commitment to continuous improvement for every student. Implementation science will develop the tools to instantly analyze and suggest means to address the gaps that emerge. As a society, we will have dramatically improved our understanding of race and culture. This victory will not have been easily won. History will show that a combination of courage, humility, and ongoing honest dialogue was needed to realize the vision of America as a place where all are equal.

Leadership matters
Leadership will still matter. Local school boards will represent their communities in ongoing discussions about enhancing educational opportunities and the best way to deliver them. Sadly, some things will not change. The debate over what constitutes “full funding” of education will still be a central topic of statehouses and school boards.

Continued push for early childhood education
Early childhood education will be universal, with a significant amount of parent choice. Families will have support from before their child is born, with the ability to learn about best practices to help facilitate their child’s development. There will be many high-quality opportunities that make it convenient for families to engage in early childhood education. Public schools will be the center of this movement, providing robust programming that utilizes the most up-to-date research about child development and family support. This will include wrap-around services to create a hub for family and social services.

A more personalized experience for elementary school
Elementary education will look similar in many ways at first glance. Because public elementary schools are vital to socialization, students’ need to be together will remain the same. In general, age-level grouping through intermediate grades will be the norm though multi-grade approaches will be far more common than today. Flexible grouping and some departmentalization will take hold to provide a more personalized approach intended to accelerate all learners’ growth. Effective integration of the fine arts will be the norm so that children can fully express what they know in a variety of ways.

More choices for middle school students
While humanity will continue to evolve, middle school students’ brains will still be as “under construction” as they are today. However, educators will be armed with more detailed information about leveraging the power of the adolescent brain’s power for optimal learning. Students will have more choice in their learning — in both content and modality. Background knowledge will be developed through experiential education and virtual reality will broaden the learning experience, allowing them to be truly immersed in their subjects.

More access to content area experts for high school students
High schoolers will see the most significant changes since the dawn of the industrial education model. While comprehensive high schools will still exist, competency-based learning will have long prevailed as the predominant method of assessing students. High school students will have a nearly infinite academic choice, guided by professional educators who are experts in the science of learning and relationship-builders, serving as facilitators rather than direct instruction. Students will have ample access to content area experts who will work with students at their home school and with others throughout the country via next-generation video conference technology.

There will be multiple pathways for students to achieve a high school degree. These will include traditional liberal arts paths, technical training, or more concentrated experiences in specialized areas like the arts. Standardized assessment will be multifaceted and fully embedded in day-to-day coursework, offering real-time status updates about how students are progressing toward mastery. Schools will award dual diplomas that include the equivalent of an associate degree or some kind of industry-level credential. All the while, high school students will still do the things that teenagers do: demonstrating a zest for life, pushing boundaries, and prompting adults to still say things like “kids these days …”

Over the next 40 years, public education will change. However, public educators’ steadfast commitment to doing good things for kids will be unwavering as we work to help each generation realize its full potential to make our planet a better place for everyone.

Matt Hillmann is the superintendent for Northfield Public Schools. To comment on his essay, you can reach him at mhillmann@northfieldschools.org.

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QUESTION: What is the role of the school board in Strategic Planning?

ANSWER: The school board’s role is to govern. The school district’s Strategic Plan is the board’s visionary road map for governing while focusing on student achievement for all. To govern successfully, MSBA recommends the school board utilize their district’s Strategic Plan regularly when making decisions, especially during challenging times. It is important to have an up-to-date, easy-to-follow Strategic Plan that sets the district’s direction and goals. Once the strategic direction and goals are in place, the school board can develop its Strategic Governance Framework by aligning district goals with the superintendent goals and board goals. MSBA is available to assist school districts with this process.

QUESTION: How does our board utilize our Strategic Plan during challenging times?

ANSWER: Remember, the district’s Strategic Plan is the visionary road map for governing while focusing on student achievement for all. Always reference the district’s Strategic Plan when making decisions, especially during challenging times. Have the district’s Strategic Plan in front of the board at all meetings, post it on the district website, make it available to all internal stakeholders (board, administration, staff, students) and all external stakeholders (community members). Clearly refer to and reference the direction and goals of the district Strategic Plan for each decision made by the board. When board action is being taken, the question should be asked, “How does this action relate to the goals of our Strategic Plan?”
QUESTION: Should our district update or adapt our Strategic Plan during these challenging times?

ANSWER: Absolutely! Take time to revisit the district’s strategic direction and goals by reviewing, revising, and readjusting for the short term. Ask your superintendent for leadership and direction on this task. In addition, the school board should conduct a formal review of the Strategic Plan annually. The annual review should include an update on progress made and a determination of next steps to be taken. A Strategic Governance Framework can then be developed by aligning superintendent and board goals with district goals found in the Strategic Plan.

QUESTION: If our district needs a new Strategic Plan, a revised Strategic Plan, or would like to get back on track with utilizing our Strategic Plan, can MSBA assist our district?

ANSWER: Effective and successful board teams (school board and superintendent) provide leadership to set high expectations for student achievement and learning for all. School board teams accomplish this by clarifying the school district’s purpose and direction. Do you want to get everyone on the same page? Does your school board team believe improvement is important? If so, MSBA is here to assist.

QUESTION: What are MSBA’s Strategic Planning services and process?

ANSWER: MSBA’s experience and knowledge can help you put your district’s Strategic Plan on the right course. Our process includes surveys, listening sessions, developing foundational items (Beliefs, Mission, Vision), and identifying future goals and objectives. MSBA is here to assist your district by offering Strategic Planning services and providing a proven, successful process. We are available to assist school districts, charter schools, education districts, service cooperatives, and other related public education entities. MSBA is proud to have our Strategic Planning Services exclusively endorsed by the Minnesota Service Cooperatives.

For more information on Strategic Planning, contact Gail Gilman, MSBA Director of Strategic Planning and Board Leadership, at ggilman@mnmsba.org.
In the Safe Learning Plan for 2020-21 announced by Governor Tim Walz on July 30, a new partnership was introduced to provide support to school districts and charter schools as they navigate the effects of COVID-19. This partnership between the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), local public health officials, and the nine service cooperatives throughout the state created a Regional Support Team (RST) in each region. Providing services and support on a regional basis was one of the primary reasons service cooperatives were established in Minnesota in 1966, and the Minnesota Service Cooperatives were ready for action.

Each RST is comprised of two health consultants (MDH), a testing coordinator (MDE) and a Regional Coordinator (service cooperative). Superintendents and charter school directors were introduced to their RST beginning August 24 and everything took off from there.

The RSTs were busy right from the start, helping schools respond to COVID-19 cases and answer a variety of questions based on the plethora of guidance provided by MDH and MDE. COVID-19 is unlike anything schools have faced in recent years, so we have worked alongside our school and district communities as a partner.

There is a whole new learning curve to successfully navigate the 2020-21 school year, and the Regional Coordinators quickly became fluent on:

- How to read decisions trees
- How to determine close contacts
- Who needs to quarantine/isolate and how to count the days
- The importance of 6-feet of social distancing
- And so much more.

Questions are asked through phone calls, email and text messages. Often times, the district has the “correct answer” figured out, but wants to walk through the situation to ensure they have not missed anything. In other instances, we problem-solve the complexities of the situation together and seek input from experts on the
A school building affects a child’s ability to learn. 

True ☑️ False ❌

It is impossible to remodel/build a school on time and within budget. 

☐ True ☑️ False ❌

Working with multiple vendors is more efficient and saves money on a construction project. 

☐ True ☑️ False ❌

Student test scores improve in modern learning environments. 

☑️ True ☑️ False ❌

Shelly Maes is the Manager of Member Services & Foundation Executive Director of the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative (SWWC) based in Marshall. Direct questions to Shelly at shelly.maes@swwc.org.
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Amanda N.
MSBA provides a wide range of services for the school districts and charter schools it serves. One of these functions — filing amicus briefs — is a lesser known, yet significant role that MSBA fulfills.

A “friend of the court,” an amicus curiae is an individual or organization that is not a party in pending litigation, but has a substantial interest in the case. The amicus seeks to assist the court in rendering a decision by seeking to file a brief (an amicus brief) that provides information and expertise intended to influence the court’s decision. In most situations, the amicus must receive the court’s permission to file a brief.

Amicus briefs are filed when a case reaches the appellate court level (after a trial or other legal decision at the trial court level). At the appellate level, the focus is upon legal issues, not factual matters. A key factor when considering whether to file an amicus brief focuses upon whether the legal issues pose potential concerns for MSBA members generally.

MSBA has received a number of requests in recent years from Minnesota school districts to file an amicus brief in a pending matter. When a request is received, MSBA reviews the case to determine whether the case poses legal issues that may affect Minnesota school districts generally. Additional factors are considered, including the availability of attorneys who can prepare the brief, the timeline of the pending case, the costs involved, and the potential for success in the appellate court. The MSBA Board of Directors makes the decision on amicus participation.

MSBA often works alongside the National School Boards Association (NSBA), which explains that it “brings the school board voice to courts addressing legal issues affecting public schools through its nationally-acclaimed amicus brief program.” NSBA legal staff have provided substantial assistance to MSBA and member school districts as potential amicus curiae situations arise. This support includes guidance from teams of lawyers across the nation who specialize in the legal issue.

In 2020 alone, NSBA filed briefs in federal courts concerning (1) the U.S. Department of Education’s proposal to apportion CARES funding to private schools; (2) dyslexia diagnoses and “special learning disability” designation (a joint filing with the Texas Association of School Boards’ Legal Assistance Fund); (3) student IDEA eligibility (a joint filing with the Missouri School Boards Association); and (4) school district liability in student-to-student sexual harassment.

In the past year, MSBA submitted amicus curiae briefs in two matters in response to Minnesota school districts’ requests. In the first case, MSBA argued that the trial court erred in holding that a school district’s obligation to provide door-to-door transportation to an open-enrolled student in a narrow, fact-specific situation. The appellate court agreed with the school district and MSBA. The second case involves a trial court decision regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the two-year statute, and the “continuing violation” doctrine. At the time of this article, the case has not reached final resolution.

The amicus curiae role is a significant service that MSBA provides for Minnesota’s school districts and charter schools. Through this process, MSBA can offer expertise and insight to courts as they decide cases that directly affect school districts and students.

Terence Morrow is the MSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services. Contact him at tmorrow@mnmsba.org.
Construction continues at each of ISD 181’s school buildings. The $205 million project includes renovation, remodeling, and right-sizing throughout the district as well as the new Baxter Elementary School (left).
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