2017 Leadership Conference Preview
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Christmas Day (no meetings)</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Christmas Day Observed (no meetings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Year’s Day (no meetings)</td>
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<td>New Year’s Day Observed (no meetings)</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday Observed (no meetings)</td>
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**Cover Art:**

Breanna Ramos

*MSBA thanks the students of BOLD High School (Bird Island, Olivia, and Lake Lillian) for sharing their art in this issue.*

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In sports, athletes need preparation to succeed on the field. Baseball players utilize spring training to sharpen their bunting and base running, improve their fielding and get their timing down at the plate. Football players use summer training camp to condition their bodies for 60-minute gridiron battles and their minds for absorbing complicated playbooks.

The same applies to school board members, who can prepare for the board table by attending MSBA’s training workshops. As our tagline states, MSBA is “Where School Boards Learn to Lead.” MSBA training helps bolster individual boardsmanship skills and school board team cohesion.

Because so many school districts have moved their school board elections to even-year elections, we are expecting a large class of new school board members — which makes our training even more essential. New board members should begin their “spring training” this fall by taking MSBA’s training sessions, “Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I” and “Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II.”

“Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I” covers the role of the school board, the role of the superintendent, the leadership team relationship, and common scenarios facing new board members.

“Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II” includes the training school boards are required to have by state law. This session covers core topics such as the budget, school finance, local levies, policies, significant laws affecting school boards, and personnel issues.

Both of these sessions will be offered in December, January and August (after the Summer Seminar).

“Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III” is scheduled for April and explores building a high-performing school board with a focus on leadership styles, consensus building and policy development. “Communicating with Your Community: Phase IV” focuses on community engagement.

These training sessions will provide school board members with the fundamentals and tools to ensure they have a successful tenure on the school board. We know a solid foundation of skills and knowledge is essential for building a high-functioning board, just like spring training is essential for baseball and training camp is for football.

While success isn’t guaranteed, building the fundamental knowledge and skill sets improves the chances for your individual and collective board success.

Building on these good fundamentals, the learning opportunities don’t stop there. Our annual Leadership Conference is on tap for January 12–13, 2017, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. This year’s theme is “Courageous Leadership,” and the conference will feature nearly 100 workshops and round table sessions, an Exhibit Hall, and two fantastic keynote speakers — Alan Blankstein and Alan Page.

See Pages 11–19 for more information about the 2017 Leadership Conference.

Congratulations to our new school board members and incumbents on your election. Best of luck to you all, and know that your MSBA staff is always available to help. MSBA is your “go-to” organization.

Kirk Schneidawind is the Executive Director for the Minnesota School Boards Association. To reach him about this article, email him at ksneidawind@mnmsba.org.
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WORK ON STRATEGIC PLAN 
BOOSTS MSBA AS YOUR GO-TO ASSOCIATION

By Kevin Donovan

As I write this last Journal column as your MSBA President, I am filled with many emotions. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you in this capacity. Over the last couple of years, your Minnesota School Boards Association has been growing and improving to meet the diverse and ever-evolving needs of its membership. Below are a few of the amazing changes and improvements in your MSBA.

Our biggest accomplishment is the strategic planning work and implementation that began nearly two years ago. This was a meaningful, robust coming together of the MSBA Board and staff to guide the organization for the next several years and beyond. From this weekend meeting came a strong plan to guide your association to be a more relevant and forward-thinking group for our school leaders. Our work to better MSBA was recently recognized by NSBA with the 2016 Innovation Award. (See related story on Page 21.)

One of our three strategic initiatives for MSBA is rebranding. From the Journal to staff and Board-branded clothing — we have a bold and colorful new look. I urge you to watch the video on our website that explains the logo and color choices.

Our second strategic focus is that of meeting member needs, however and whenever we are able. We are committed to reaching our school leaders via member surveys to see what is working, and in what areas we can enhance and improve. As has often been said: “This is your MSBA.” How can we be most useful and relevant for you and your district?

Personally the most exciting component of the three-pronged strategic plan is looking at all aspects of MSBA, both internally and externally, through the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion. In Minnesota, we are experiencing some major demographic changes. We also have one of the highest and most persistent achievement gaps in the country. Currently 30 percent of Minnesota students are students of color. The MSBA Board and staff feel strongly that as a leading education organization in Minnesota, we need to be receptive and reflective of the diverse populations we serve.

Here are some of my views and observations of public education over these last few years: I have seen passion, commitment, dedication, and a great deal of innovation from teachers and staff in every school I have visited. Collaboration, engagement, and intellectual curiosity are also alive and well in Minnesota schools.

Here are a few things we must do for our students and their futures: We must ensure all of our students graduate — no excuses! Graduation is the gateway to a brighter future, one where aspirational goals can be realized. We must make sure all of our students succeed and thrive in a world which we may not see. We must make sure that our resources are equitable and help all students in Minnesota get the very best our great state has to offer.

Thank you again for your trust in MSBA and your service to your districts, and most importantly, to the students of Minnesota. Our new brand statement reads: “Minnesota School Boards Association — Where School Boards Learn to Lead.” Thank you for your leadership!

Kevin Donovan is the president of the Minnesota School Boards Association. To reach him about this column, email him at kevpatdon@gmail.com.
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JOIN MY TEAM AND MAKE YOUR SCHOOL SEIZURE SMART!
MSBA’s marquee event returns in January. The 96th annual Leadership Conference is scheduled for Thursday, January 12, and Friday, January 13, 2017, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

“Courageous Leadership” is the theme of the 2017 MSBA Leadership Conference. The conference will feature a wide variety of workshops, skills sessions and round table mini-sessions to help school board members, superintendents and other school district staff find new ideas and connect with their colleagues from across the state.

The MSBA Leadership Conference’s tradition of showcasing pairs of prominent keynote speakers continues in 2017 with a pair of Alans — Alan Blankstein and Alan Page.

Alan Blankstein, an award-winning author and educational leader, will serve as the opening keynote speaker on Thursday, January 12. His keynote address is titled, “Courageous Leadership for Districtwide Success.” Blankstein began his career in education as a music teacher and is the author of the best-selling book “Failure Is Not an Option: Six Principles That Guide Student
Achievement in High-Performing Schools,” which received the Book of the Year award from Learning Forward. He has written many articles in leading education publications and provided keynote presentations and workshops for major education organizations worldwide.

In his keynote, Blankstein will discuss how educational leaders who succeed in serving the needs of all their students must find ways to pursue excellence and equity simultaneously, and to create conditions in schools that address the academic and non-academic needs of children. For all this to occur, Blankstein says leaders must have a clear sense of how to systematically build the capacity of their schools to meet the needs of the students they serve. Blankstein’s presentation will describe how such strategies are being implemented successfully, even in the most disadvantaged communities where the needs are great, and how the five principles of courageous leadership can unleash positive energy toward enhancing student success in your district.

Alan Page — a Hall of Fame football player for the Minnesota Vikings and a longtime Minnesota Supreme Court justice — will provide the closing keynote, “Education Is the Tool for Success,” on Friday, January 13.

### Pre-Conference Sessions

**Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I (formerly Phase I Workshop)**

When: 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 10
Where: Hilton Minneapolis, 1001 South Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis
Tuition: $95 for advance registrants; $105 for walk-ins.

“Learning to Lead — School Board Basics” helps new board members hit the ground running. This session covers the role of the school board, the role of the superintendent, the leadership team relationship, and common scenarios facing new board members.

Visit [www.mnmsba.org/Phase-I-Workshop](http://www.mnmsba.org/Phase-I-Workshop) for more information and to register.

**Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II (formerly Phase II Workshop)**

When: 8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, January 11
Where: Hilton Minneapolis
Tuition: $180 for advance registrants; $200 for walk-ins.

Presented by MSBA staff and state experts, “Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management” includes the training school boards are required to have by state law. The session covers core topics such as the budget, school finance, local levies, policies, significant laws affecting school boards, and personnel issues.

Visit [www.mnmsba.org/Phase-II-Workshop](http://www.mnmsba.org/Phase-II-Workshop) for more information and to register.

**Charter School Board Member Training**

When: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 11
Where: Hilton Minneapolis

Presented by MSBA staff, this training covers the three state-mandated areas for charter school board members: governance, employment and finance. Charter board members are required to start these trainings within six months of election to a charter school board and complete the trainings within one year.

Visit [www.mnmsba.org/LearningCenter/CharterSchoolBoardTraining](http://www.mnmsba.org/LearningCenter/CharterSchoolBoardTraining) to register.
During his childhood, Page’s parents reinforced the importance of education for him to achieve his “hopes and dreams.” Now, Page is the one emphasizing the value of an education — believing every student has potential, but that many students need support to realize their own hopes and dreams. With his wife, Page co-founded the Page Education Foundation, which assists students of color in their pursuit of postsecondary education; and he has written two children’s books with his daughter.

During his keynote address, Page will discuss character, race, education and a number of other topics interesting to school leaders.

In the following pages, you’ll learn more about Blankstein and Page — and preview the pre-conference learning opportunities available during Leadership Conference week.

Evening Early Bird Sessions

Bargaining Basics

When: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, January 11
Where: Minneapolis Convention Center
Tuition: $95 for advance registrants; $105 for walk-ins.

Presenters: Gary Lee, MSBA Director of Management Services; Amy Fullenkamp-Taylor, MSBA Associate Director of Management Services; and Bill Kautt, MSBA Associate Director of Management Services

This is essential training for newly elected school board members or new negotiators, and a great refresher for veteran negotiators. Negotiating employee Master Agreements for both licensed and non-licensed staff is among the school board’s most complex, technical, and stressful duties. This session is designed to introduce new school board members, or school board members new to the negotiating team, to the negotiations process. Presenters will discuss the Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA), the Open Meeting Law (OML), and other laws that may impact negotiations. In addition, the presenters will take attendees through choosing a negotiations team, the various responsibilities for all school board members, and how to develop a process to follow during negotiations.

Torn from the Headlines: Social Media Challenges and Policy-Guided Responses

When: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, January 11
Where: Minneapolis Convention Center
Tuition: $95 for advance registrants; $105 for walk-ins.

Presenters: Sandy Gundlach, MSBA Director of School Board Services; and Cathy Miller, MSBA Director of Policy and Legal Services

Discuss real-life problems and situations school boards face involving social media, decision-making, and policy. Hypothetical but realistic situations provide opportunities to think about the impact of and school district response to the use of social media for student-teacher communications, sharing private information, cyberbullying, complaints about coaches, and employees’ negative comments about the school district and other school district employees, students, and parents. This will be an active experience, so be prepared to dive into policy with fellow board members from around the state.

Visit http://www.mnmsba.org/EarlyBirdSessions for more information.
Author Alan Blankstein would like educational leaders to move beyond a motto like “Every Student Succeeds” and put their actions where their motto is.

“Once everyone agrees all students should succeed, what do you do when they don’t?” he asked. “That goes back to courageous leadership by saying ‘We agreed to this, and we’re going to take actions to do it.’”

Blankstein, MSBA’s opening keynote speaker for the 2017 Leadership Conference, has a system of how school leaders can deal with bigger problems — five principles to help navigate from identifying a problem to taking action together to try to solve it.

Many leaders who make the necessary changes start with facing the facts and their fears. The facts may point to disparities between different racial or income groups on their performance. Usually, Blankstein said, it’s not looked at or dealt with. Courageous leaders HAVE looked at it and dealt with it.

Blankstein says the next step is to bring the issue back to their core beliefs. “Does this matter to us? And why do we care about it?” he asked.

As school leaders, they have the power to make change. But too many times, those less courageous blame the parents or say “the kids don’t care” or find some other excuse, Blankstein said.

“Instead of looking at what they can’t do, courageous leaders look at what they CAN do,” he said. “Then, they expand on what they can do.”

It starts with picking a focus. An example might be dealing with behavioral issues. Acknowledge
the issue and then, with staff and faculty all involved, find how to create something positive. Ask what the cause of the issue might be. “As we start to dig, maybe we agree that students are disengaged,” he said. “Then we ask: ‘How do we engage them?’ Maybe you find the instruction is not engaging or not sufficient for all levels of learning. So instead of feeling like a failure, those students opt out. Then, have a discussion of what good instruction for all really is.”

Together, have the discussions and come up with plans. It’s then up to the leaders to make sure the school is doing what the leadership said they would do and also measure how effective it is and how it will be evaluated.

His example is Tacoma, which had a problem with stable housing for kids. The district had a mobility rate of 200 percent for the elementary school. Working with business and governmental partners, they tackled the problem by offering stable housing for families, and mobility has dropped to 75 percent.

Another principle that is key to courageous leadership is developing relationships and trust. A study by Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider followed 400 Chicago elementary schools for five years on the topic of relational trust. “It found that schools with low relational trust between students and teachers and school leaders and the community had a ZERO percent chance of raising student achievement,” he said. Blankstein said the study also shows that building trust among the adults is the most important.

“You get that trust by building relationships,” he said. Leaders must support teachers reaching out to parents and find meaningful ways to include the community in solving different issues.

“Basically, school leaders need to meet their core values with actions,” he said. “A courageous leader builds the relationships and brings people along.”

Alan Blankstein is the author of 18 books, including “Excellence Through Equity” and his award-winning book, “Failure Is Not an Option: Six Principles That Guide Student Achievement in High-Performing Schools.” He is the founder of Solution Tree and has served 25 years as president of the HOPE Foundation, after beginning his career as a music teacher. Readers can contact Alan at alan@hopefoundation.org.

Greg Abbott is the MSBA Communications Director. You can reach him at gabbott@mnmsba.org.
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Alan Page’s parents stressed the significance of education and good citizenship to him at an early age.

“They reinforced at every turn the importance of education if I was going to have a better life than they had,” Page said. “Neither one of my parents had been able to go to school beyond high school. They understood that education was a tool that allows people to achieve whatever their hopes and dreams may be. Education allows people to become productive members of society — and my parents wanted that for me, my brother and my two sisters.”


“No matter who you are, no matter what your background, your skin color, your ability or disability . . . education is a tool that can overcome a lot of hurdles,” he said.

Education served as a springboard to help Page achieve his own hopes and dreams throughout his remarkable life, culminating in a 23-year tenure as a Minnesota Supreme Court justice.

Now Page is the one emphasizing the value of an education — believing every student has potential, but that many students need support to realize their hopes and dreams.

Page will be the closing keynote speaker for the 2017 MSBA Leadership Conference on Friday, January 13, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. During his keynote address, “Education continued on page 18 >
Is the Tool for Success,” Page will discuss character, race, education and a number of other topics of interest to school leaders.

To most, Page is best known for his football career. He played collegiately at the University of Notre Dame. At Notre Dame, Page led his team to the 1966 national title and received his degree in political science. Professionally, he played for the Minnesota Vikings (1967–1978) and the Chicago Bears (1978–1981).

During his NFL career, he played in 218 consecutive games, earned All-Pro honors six times and was voted to nine consecutive Pro Bowls. In 1971, he was named the NFL’s Most Valuable Player. (Page and former New York Giants linebacker, Lawrence Taylor, are the only two defensive players in NFL history to be named league MVP.)

Page was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1988 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 1993.

One of the more intriguing aspects about Page is his pursuit of a law degree during his NFL playing career. He received his degree (Juris Doctor) from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1978. “My interest in the law developed before it ever occurred to me that I might be a football player,” Page said. “That interest started when I was in the third, fourth, fifth grades.”

After graduating from law school, Page worked as an attorney for a law firm in Minneapolis, then served seven years as an attorney in the office of the Minnesota Attorney General.

In 1992, Page become the first African American elected to the Minnesota Supreme Court. When Page was re-elected in 1998, he became the biggest vote-getter in Minnesota history. He was re-elected in 2004 and 2010 and served until he reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 in 2015.

Page has drawn high praise from his Supreme Court colleagues and other notable officials, including Governor Mark Dayton, who once described him as “a combination of experience, wisdom and integrity.”

Leadership

With “Courageous Leadership” being the theme of the 2017 MSBA Leadership Conference, Page was asked what qualities he thought made someone an effective leader.

“I think it’s the ability to listen,” Page said. “The ability to bring out in people their willingness to be a part of whatever it is you’re working on. And not so much being someone who directs their orders. Leaders have to figure out ways to support people in achieving whatever they’re trying to accomplish.”

Page added that “leadership is something I learned along the way, from watching various perspectives of those who are successful.”

Page learned about leadership first-hand from two Hall of Fame coaches — Ara Parseghian and Bud Grant.

Parseghian was Page’s head coach at Notre Dame. Parseghian had a career coaching record of 170-58-6 and won two national championships —
including the title he won with Page in 1966. In 2005, Page said Paraseghian made him realize that “if we understand the big picture and take care of the little things, we stand a good chance of being successful.”

Grant went 168-108-5 and led the Vikings to four Super Bowl appearances with Page anchoring the defense. Grant praised Page in the “Football Life” documentary. “Alan is a very bright guy and was always interested in why we did things,” he said. “Not many players ask why, you just say do this. But Alan was more interested in why and how and it made him a better player.”

Standing tall

The concept of improving equity in education continues to build momentum statewide and nationwide. For Page, equity in education is something he has long championed, having grown up in Canton, Ohio, during the segregation era.

“If we are to have an orderly society, then people have to have hope that they can participate in whatever its benefits are,” he said. “Education is the central tool for preparing people to be in the position to take advantage of what society has to offer.”

On July 30, 1988, Page was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Coincidentally, the Hall of Fame is situated in his hometown of Canton. (During his late teenage years, Page worked on a construction team that built the original Hall of Fame building.)

Page selected an educator — Willarene Beasley, principal of Minneapolis North Community High School at the time — to deliver his enshrinement speech.

“Millions of blacks and other minorities stand tall today, for Alan has helped to change the stereotypes of blacks,” Beasley said that day. “He not only excelled in sports, but he excelled in education. Millions of parents in education stand tall today for the position that Alan has taken on education and so youth all over the country, too, stand tall, for Alan brings hope and pride in serving as a role model for all of them.”

Page followed Beasley at the podium and devoted his induction remarks to education.

“On this occasion, I ask myself, ‘What contribution can I still make that would be truly worthy of the outpouring of warmth and good feelings as I have received today?’ And the answer, for me, is clear: to help give other children the chance to achieve their dreams,” Page said.

Page made good on his promise that same year when he and his wife, Diane, established the Page Education Foundation. The mission of the Page Education Foundation is to encourage, motivate, and assist young men and women of color in the pursuit of education beyond high school. Through August 2016, Page said the foundation has helped approximately 4,500 students.

A pair of Page-turners

Unsurprisingly, Page successfully imparted the value of education to his own children. His son (Justin) is a lawyer at the Minnesota Disability Law Center, his oldest daughter (Nina) works as a paralegal, and his middle daughter (Georgianne) designs websites.

His youngest daughter, Kamie, teaches second-grade students at The Blake School in Minnesota (after starting her career in the Hopkins Public School system).

For the 25th anniversary of the Page Education Foundation, it was suggested that — as both an honor to the foundation and a fundraising opportunity — Page should write a children’s book, given his focus on and interest in children.

Page enlisted Kamie’s assistance as a co-writer, and their collaboration produced 2013’s tongue-twister titled, “Alan and his Perfectly Pointy Impossibly Perpendicular Pinky.”

“The book was inspired by kids who I had seen in classrooms,” Page said. “The kid who everybody thinks is either a troublemaker or not the smartest kid around. Those kids have something to offer. So we built the story around that theme.”

The Pages followed up with “The Invisible You” in 2014. Page said the book was Kamie’s idea.

“As a second-grade teacher, Kamie was frustrated with the fact that, in terms of children and their identities and issues of self-awareness and race and issues surrounding equity, there was no real good vehicle to talk about that,” Page said.

Page said the response to both books has been positive from students and teachers.

“The classrooms where I have read the books, the teachers find them helpful and are encouraged by them,” he said. “The students enjoy them. We think they have been received pretty well.”

All proceeds from the books go right back to the Page Education Foundation.

After bringing pain to NFL quarterbacks, administering justice for Minnesota and promoting education — what’s next for Alan Page?

“I’m still trying to figure out what to do when I grow up,” Page said.

Bruce Lombard is MSBA’s Associate Director of Communications. Contact him at blombard@mnmsba.org.
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EXCELLENCE IN THE HEARTLAND

MSBA earns NSBA’s inaugural Innovation Award

By Kathleen Vail

Mark Twain once said, “Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.” The leadership and staff at the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) had that idea in mind as they attended a retreat nearly two years ago.

The strategic plan that emerged from the retreat earned the state association the 2016 Innovation Award from the National School Boards Association. The award recognizes state school boards associations that show forward-thinking creativity in serving their members. This is the first year for the award, and MSBA is the first recipient.

“What’s the plan?”

Minnesota, like many parts of the country, is experiencing demographics shifts. The state’s population is getting older, with the number of adults over the age of 65 projected to be larger than the number of children under 17 in the next two decades. Also in those decades, Minnesota’s nonwhite population is expected to grow to 25 percent of the state’s total population.

“We know that Minnesota is changing,” says MSBA Executive Director Kirk Schneidawind, “and we want our school districts and school boards to be thoughtful and mindful of that as they plan for the future.”

Currently the state’s achievement gap between white and nonwhite students is one of the widest in the country. These projections and the current gap mean that Minnesota school boards and school leaders must deal with and prepare for these challenges. MSBA aims to be the place to provide the training, resources, and advocacy to help them meet these challenges.

MSBA’s two-day retreat took on a sense of urgency as the group hashed out a blueprint that would guide the association’s work. MSBA President Kevin Donovan, who also serves on the Mahtomedi School Board, says the process was energizing. “On many of the boards I served on over the years, continued on page 22 >
we do strategic planning. The strategic plan is adopted and then put on the shelf, never to be looked at again."

This plan is different, he says. "It is being used, it's been adopted and we're starting to see the results."

The goals of the strategic plan:
- Offer training and support to members on equity and diversity issues
- Position MSBA as the go-to education organization in Minnesota
- Meet the needs of members

"Those were the three big pieces that we focused on, that we built our action plans from, and that will provide staff direction in achieving those goals," says Schneidawind.

Equity and diversity

For the larger, urban and inner-ring districts in Minnesota, racial and ethnic diversity are familiar. The Twin Cities has the largest Hmong population in the world outside of Asia, and the largest Somali population in the U.S.

However, as the demographic projections make clear, this diversity is making its way to the suburbs, and eventually will reach rural areas, as well. School boards and superintendents will need support in adjusting or changing district services, curriculum, and policies to become more equitable.

"There's no simple solution to that," says Schneidawind. "It's going to be an evolving and continuous process. It's something that we know that our districts need to address, plan for and continue to work through it."

So MSBA staff decided to use the association's annual summer meeting as a place to start providing support and training. The 2016 Summer Seminar in August, aptly named "Framing the Equity Conversation," featured sessions on:
- Eliminating barriers for underrepresented and students of color through board policy
- School climate research
- Finding alternatives to suspension and expulsion
- Using an equity dashboard to monitor achievement gaps
- Using a racial equity approach to critical teacher shortages

Speaker Bukata Hayes, executive director of the Greater Mankato Diversity Council, presented on how school leaders can uncover and face the sometimes unconscious biases and assumptions they carry into interactions with students. Mary Fertakis, school board member in Tukwila, Washington — the most diverse district in the country — led a discussion on the process of engaging in conversations around equity issues.

Those conversations can be difficult, says former MSBA Board Director Jodi Sapp, who serves on the Mankato Area School Board. "But it's something that needs to be powered through. I think MSBA is the perfect vehicle to help school board members in the state do that."
A new look

The second goal of the strategic plan is rebranding the association to position it as the go-to education organization in the state. The rebranding started with a new logo and tagline.

“We really want to strive to be a proactive leader in the education realm and for our members; we want to be future focused. That’s why I think it’s important to have a brand and an identity and something that people can really relate to and grab onto immediately,” says MSBA Deputy Executive Director Tiffany Rodning.

The redesign of a logo that was used to identify the association for more than 20 years was not an easy task. “We felt this is a perfect opportunity to focus on and to bring some consistency to the use of our logo, and to have MSBA be a real recognizable force and organization here to help our members,” says Rodning.

The new logo portrays the “confident graduate,” reflecting the MSBA brand personality traits of being resourceful, passionate, nimble, professional, and savvy. The use of primary colors plus green represents early childhood through high school education.

The graduate with the cap, tassel, and gown represents the goal of every school board member and superintendent.

The gold arc signifies a bright future beyond graduation. Public education prepares students to succeed after high school.

The tagline — “Where Minnesota School Boards Learn to Lead” — denotes that school board members learn to lead through advocacy, training, policy development, effective communications, and strategic planning, among other things.

“A brand is important for consistency purposes for building a relationship with our members and giving them something to immediately identify with,” says Rodning. “When a piece of information comes out that we have worked on for our members to solve an issue or to work on an issue, or if it’s an issue or a bill going through the legislature, we immediately want our members to know that MSBA has had a hand in that piece.”

Listening and learning

The third goal of the strategic plan is becoming more responsive to members. MSBA staff and board wanted to find out if the association was giving its members what they need and want. “Are we fulfilling their needs? Are we relevant to what they need today?” Donovan says. “So the plan to survey the members was adopted.”

A series of surveys is planned. The first, which was done in September 2015, focused on communications. “We started with communications primarily because it’s the piece that touches our members the most,” says Schneidawind. “We knew it was an opportunity for us, in the digital age, to reconfigure, reformat, refocus and repurpose our communications.”

The five-minute survey, designed with the busy school board member in mind, asked members about communications vehicles, frequency, ease of use, and social media, among other items.

“We can’t assume that everyone’s going to want something mailed to them like we did 15 to 20 years ago,” says MSBA board member Betsy Anderson, who also is a member of the Hopkins School Board. “Some board members are much more interested in seeing something online. But we certainly have board members who would feel a lot more comfortable with something in hand. So we asked those questions, we got those answers, and we’re moving forward in putting those results in play.”

Some results of the communications survey: Members like MSBA’s communications and publications, but they do not like having to access password-protected content. MSBA has been successful in cutting down email overload: 91 percent of members said the association sends the right amount of email. Also, members prefer Facebook and Twitter to other forms of social media.

“From the survey, what we learned is that there’s an appetite for a more consistent message and a more automated way of communicating,” says Anderson. “We are looking forward to hearing from our members about those areas of the association and what we can do to improve and make it better for them.”

Walking taller

NSBA’s Innovation Award recognizes the creative and outstanding work of state school boards associations — particularly as they work in partnership with their member school boards to raise student achievement. MSBA is the inaugural winner on the strength of not only its strategic plan, but also because of the goals of the plan.

“Our winning state association has deliberately directed the focus of its work squarely on the needs of students. That’s so important,” says Barbara Riley, who serves as Regional Director of the Western Region on NSBA’s Board of Directors and is co-chair of the Innovation Award committee. “All of us originally chose to serve on school boards because we genuinely care about the children in our communities. So this focus brings us all full circle to that noble motive of public service.”

One result of the strategic plan, says Anderson, is a renewed energy among the MSBA staff to make the association the go-to organization for school leaders in the state. The steps laid out in the strategic plan are helping keep them focused and on track.

She says, “We are all walking a little taller knowing that we’ve got some really great stuff happening here.”

Kathleen Vail (kvail@nsba.org) is editor-in-chief of American School Board Journal.

Visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PYnTxEKajk for a video regarding MSBA’s Innovation Award.
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SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

Northwest Regional Partnership helps teachers earn graduate credits for new accreditation requirements

By Jane Eastes

Every year, thousands of high school students across Minnesota participate in college-level courses taught in their high school through concurrent enrollment arrangements. Concurrent enrollment classes are postsecondary curriculum taught in the high school by high school teachers under a partnership arrangement with a credit-granting, postsecondary institution. These classes offer secondary students the chance to experience college-level expectations and earn college credit in a familiar and supportive environment.

However, the future of concurrent enrollment classes in Minnesota high schools dimmed this year when the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) — the organization responsible for accrediting degree-granting postsecondary educational institutions — decided to enforce a policy provision that requires a high school teacher teaching a concurrent enrollment course in a K–12 high school to have a master’s degree or 18 graduate credits in the subject matter they were teaching. Many teachers have a master’s in education, but not a degree in the subject area, or they have some graduate credits, but not enough to qualify for certification. Without meeting the certification requirements of the Higher Learning Commission, many teachers would have to stop teaching concurrent enrollment courses.

When the Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) Education Team looked at potential effects of this decision, the reality was sobering. Most of the high schools in the northwest region of the state would be affected. Of the more than 300 teachers teaching postsecondary classes concurrently, about 75 percent need additional graduate course work to come into compliance with the HLC requirements. Without certification, teachers will lose professional opportunities and, most importantly, thousands of students will lose valuable learning opportunities and the chance to earn postsecondary credit while attending high school.

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The HLC did extend the deadline for compliance to 2022, but held fast that all teachers must come into compliance by that time. No amount of precedent, arguments about the qualifications of a teaching degree, or requests for exemptions was going to sway the outcome.

“It was a wake-up moment for us,” said Jeremy Kovash, LCSC Executive Director. “We realized there was no turning back, and we had to find a positive way to move forward and maintain the important asset that concurrent enrollment classes provide to our schools and students.”

Kovash and Joshua Nelson, LCSC Manager of Education Services, quickly contacted their network of partners and began to lay out a plan to assist willing high school teachers in achieving their graduate credits in their chosen subject matter. The two were fully aware that most secondary teachers would find it difficult to afford the time and money needed to go back to graduate school in a traditional format.

“This is a program tailor-made for the Service Cooperatives” Nelson explained. “We could see the potential impact of the HLC’s decision on a regional level, and the cooperatives have the scale necessary to pull together a plan on behalf of our K–12 members using our regional and state partnerships.”

First to respond was Minnesota State University-Moorhead’s (MSUM) Dean Boyd Bradbury. Together, LCSC and MSUM, joined by the Northwest Service Cooperative (NWSC), worked together to craft what is now known as the Northwest Regional Partnership project. MSUM agreed to develop curriculum for 18 online credits in subject areas commonly taught in concurrent enrollment courses. LCSC agreed to provide course administration and teacher mentoring. The final piece needed was funding. To overcome the two greatest barriers to the project, the recruitment of content writers for an online curriculum and the difficulty of recruiting concurrent enrollment teachers, the partnership needed funding to pay for curriculum development and stipends for teachers who enrolled and joined a cohort.

Together, the partners put together a budget and the data for a convincing argument to the Legislature that resulted in an appropriation of 3 million dollars for the project in the supplemental tax bill passed in the last legislative session. With funding secured, MSUM has started the curriculum creation process.

Rick Sansted, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning at the Alexandria School District, commends the program design for being both attractive and achievable way for teachers to gain certification.

“Concurrent enrollment is a signature part of what we can offer as a district for the full student experience,” Sansted said. “We had a high level of concern that we would have to reduce the number of classes taught because of this rule enforcement, and students would be caught in the middle. MSUM and the Service Cooperatives have put together an innovative and reasonable program that allows our teachers to gain the credit they need to continue providing college level opportunities for Alexandria students.”

Fergus Falls School Board member Tarma Carlson agrees.

“Adding graduate courses is a big decision for anyone, especially an already busy teacher,” Carlson said. “The flexibility and affordability designed into this project will ease the burden of getting the required credits. For teachers without a master’s degree, this is an outstanding opportunity to get the first 18 credits free. This should have a positive impact on the participating teachers and their students for years to come.”

The partnership anticipates offering limited coursework as early as fall 2016. The full program is projected to start for teachers in the Lakes Country and Northwest Service Cooperative regions in January 2017.

Jane Eastes is the Director of Operations for the Fergus Falls-based Lakes Country Service Cooperative.

Direct questions to Jane at jeastes@lcsc.org. Visit the Lakes Country Service Cooperative website at www.lcsc.org.
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Typically, secondary and postsecondary institutions operate in different spheres, creating gaps in students’ knowledge and skills, leading to difficult transitions for the students. One arena that links both K–12 and higher education is dual or concurrent enrollment — students earning college credit in high school. I love working in this space, where the work I do bridges gaps and leads to smoother pathways for students. Not only do I love the concurrent enrollment world, I care passionately for making the community I live in a better place. Thus, I have devoted my research to better understand educational inequity, particularly in our urban or high-minority schools.

Students of color achieve secondary and postsecondary educational credentials at lower rates than white students in the United States and in Minnesota. This fact brought me to my doctoral work and led me to a dissertation bridging my love for the crossover of K–12 and higher education with a desire to improve the educational experiences for Minnesota students. My dissertation consisted of a mixed methods analysis framed by critical race theory. Critical race theory puts race at the center of the research, with the belief that racism is normal, ordinary, and often difficult to identify.
Dual enrollment — the numbers

In an effort to identify statewide trends illuminating potential structural racism in Minnesota, I used the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) to gather information on public high school graduates from the Class of 2011. Overall, the SLEDS data confirmed graduates of color participated in dual enrollment at a disproportionate rate compared to their class make-up.

- Graduates of color made up 18 percent of the Class of 2011, but only 12 percent of dual enrollment participants.
- Thirty-four percent of white graduates participated in dual enrollment compared to 21 percent of graduates of color.

Additionally, disaggregating the data by the broad racial/ethnic groups showed differences in participation. Whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders had the largest number of participants, whereas Hispanic/Latino and black/African American graduates had the smallest percentage of dual enrollment participants.

- 34 percent of white graduates participated in dual enrollment
- 26 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders graduates participated in dual enrollment
- 24 percent of Native/American Indian graduates participated in dual enrollment
- 21 percent of Hispanic/Latino graduates participated in dual enrollment
- 17 percent of black/African-American graduates participated in dual enrollment

A key element of my research dove into participation rates at high-minority high schools. High-minority high schools serve 37.5 percent students of color or more and represent one-quarter of the educational facilities for high school-age students. Minnesota’s high-minority high schools are more likely to be state-approved alternative programs (SAAP) rather than a comprehensive senior or secondary school, which differed from predominantly white high schools. Regardless of school type, Minnesota high schools failed to create environments that led to equitable participation in dual enrollment by students of color. Graduates of color, in all types of educational facilities, participated in dual enrollment at disproportionately low rates compared to White graduates. See Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of dual enrollment participation at different types of Minnesota high schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students of Color</th>
<th>White students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Highs</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAAPs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Differences existed in participation between students of color and white students at high-minority high schools and predominantly white high schools. Sixty-two percent of high-minority high schools had at least one student dually enrolled compared to 76 percent of predominantly white high schools, a 14 percentage point gap. More students of color participated in dual enrollment at high-minority high schools than white students, but the gap between white and students of color is small (Table 2.) At predominantly white high schools, an even wider gap exists, with many fewer students of color participating (Table 3).

These numbers suggested institutional or structural barriers to access for students of color. To provide greater context for the statewide numbers, I spent time interviewing, observing and documenting the process and environment at two high-minority high schools within the Twin Cities. These two sites provided a better understanding of the access and climate issues affecting dual enrollment participation.

### Dual enrollment access for students of color — student perception

In each high school, school staff and students acknowledged fewer students of color in dual enrollment courses, but the perception of why differed based on the positionality of those in the school. Students suggested race was a factor for the low enrollment for three reasons. The first reason was the perception of the courses as only for white students. Olivia said, “If I told my friends, ‘I’m in AP class’ they’d be like, ‘What, you’re in AP class?’ like they expect that more white people are in there.”

Secondly, students of color reported feeling a need to prove themselves to both teachers and students within the classroom. Makayla stated:

“Most of the time it’s mostly African-American students, which is their fault, [they] fight and stuff . . . I feel like that creates the bias in the teachers’ minds of the African-American students and they [teachers] just kind of see like, oh maybe, they just see us all the same. And I never fought and I don’t have any intentions of fighting anyone any time soon. So, it’s like once I get in there it’s like I have to prove I’m not disruptive, I’m not one of those students. I’m just here to learn just like the rest of the students.”

Lastly, students felt students of color did not receive the same encouragement to participate in advanced or dual enrollment courses and were ridiculed for it. Laura said, “I’m not sure even such classes are actually . . . introduced to those sort of minorities...
unless they’re doing exceedingly well than the rest [of the students].” Laura went on to say, “[The] majority of my friends are actually people of color and they weren’t really getting told to join these classes or that they were fit for the classes and yet I would see white kids kind of mocking those who took the regular classes saying they were ‘ratchet’ [very poor in quality or ability] and all that stuff when it didn’t really make sense to me. How could a kid feel as though they’re capable of taking a class when nobody’s giving them that initiative to?”

Dual enrollment access for students of color — staff perception

Staff perception of why fewer students participated in dual enrollment focused on external factors, largely out of the school’s control, which were not related to race. The most often cited explanation: students lacked academic readiness. Sandy, a counselor said, “I think socio-economic is a huge factor, because parents can’t focus on these other things, they’re just focusing on getting through the next day or two, or week. That’s more of a factor than I think gender or race or [or] anything to me.” In Minnesota, communities of color continue to struggle economically, creating a prime environment for the intersection of race and class. Intersectionality confounds the issue and opens the door for Minnesota schools to deny the effects of racial bias on disproportionate participation rates. Districts blame poverty, a more palatable option that holds the students and family accountable, rather than evaluating practices, policies, and procedures as contributors to the discrepancies.

With the state’s demographics and hyper-segregation, a classroom with only white, high-achieving students seems ordinary rather than a cause for concern and missing the opportunity to ask where are, or what happened to, the students of color. This reality makes it easier for the dominant culture and system to believe other reasons must be at play for the inequities, especially individual issues such as a lack of readiness, initiative, or poverty. The student voice within this research suggests school districts need to revisit the conversation with a deeper focus on race and the systemic barriers at play.

Practical implications

Dual enrollment has the potential to help increase the graduation rates and success for students of color. Yet, if students feel the environment is toxic and staff feel they have done all they can to encourage students, progress cannot be made. To make change, racial equity must be at the center. Schools must acknowledge and address unconscious bias and identify policies and procedures that favor the dominant culture.

Each school staff member must participate in an ongoing assessment of bias and assumptions that lead to potentially unconscious, but detrimental racism. Schools need to provide space for school staff to access data, engage in dialogue, be uncomfortable, and find mentors or supports to assist them on their journey. The goal is to shift from thinking about “Why do they do this?” to “How do I contribute to this problem?” This must be an ongoing and ever-present part of school staff conversations.

To move high schools forward and create more diverse dual enrollment classrooms, high schools must acknowledge the school climate and culture surrounding advanced courses. The entire school should review policies and practices targeting inherent bias towards the dominant culture. Interviewing students, changing policies and procedures negatively affecting the access and outcomes for students of color, and creating space for all educators to engage in a plan to address their biases and assumptions will bring to light the negative effects of white privilege in the classroom and school building; ultimately, increasing the access and success of all students.

Jennifer Trost is the Director of Partnerships and Collaborations at Century College in White Bear Lake. Contact Jennifer at tros0053@umn.edu.
Most of us have heard the phrase, “It takes a village to raise a child.” As a parent, I completely agree! As an educational professional, I think this phrase applies equally to translating research to educational practice — it takes a village, and it is not as easy as it sounds! I have spent the last 20 years of my career working in schools to try to improve educational outcomes for students. While I continue to have the same mission, I am now working at the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota as an Associate Director. Now, my task is assisting school districts and other educational organizations to use the results of research to help guide their work toward closing the achievement gap and increasing educational outcomes for all students.

My experience over the past 20 years has largely been focused on how to maintain effective programs for students during tough economic times. We have all faced budget cuts, quickly rising benefit costs, salary increases for staff, and a growing number of high-needs students. Fortunately, I learned there are strategies available that can raise achievement for all students without breaking the bank! However, the challenge for leaders is to distinguish the expenditures that really make a difference for students from a hundred that do not. Knowing what works requires district leaders to ask different questions.

Typically, conversations start out by asking, “What works in education?” While this may seem like a great question, a more powerful question is, “What works best?” If you review the educational research literature, there are thousands of strategies that “work.” However, we need to identify those strategies that have the greatest impact on student achievement and make sure those strategies are well-embedded in the instructional environment. When we talk about closing the achievement gap, we need to identify strategies and frameworks that will accelerate student achievement and allow them to make more than one year’s growth in one year.
Imagine if you had answers to reasons for the following observations during your annual budget preparation:

- Students of teachers receiving support from instructional coaches gained four months more learning than students of teachers who did not receive coaching.
- Students of teachers who received professional development in [pick your area] fared no better than students of teachers who did not receive the professional development.
- Students who used online “flex books” performed similarly on standardized tests of achievement to students who used traditional textbooks.

If you were trying to make budget decisions about those three areas, you may decide to invest in instructional coaches, change the way professional development is delivered, and move away from purchasing textbooks in selected areas. But having data like this requires work. It requires that districts evaluate all programs, frameworks and strategies using multiple measures. Many districts don’t have the internal capacity to do this type of work.

In the ongoing quest to translate research to practice, I will be writing a regular column in MSBA’s The Leader newsletter. We are in the process of developing a partnership with MSBA in order to bring this research to practice for school districts.

In addition, CAREI wants to help! The basis for much of our work last year and moving into future years was the completion of a Statewide Needs Assessment focusing on research, evaluation, and assessment. A large percentage of survey respondents indicated their school’s or district’s capacity to effectively use data to guide educational decisions was fair or poor. Despite substantial motivations and efforts to use data, most educational systems in Minnesota lack the capacity to meet their own needs for data-based decision making. In addition, those who responded to the interviews and surveys consistently indicated a lack of resources and expertise to support their efforts. To truly leverage state and local investments, professional educators require infrastructure to build capacity and efficiencies to use data that improve educational outcomes.

Historically, CARIE coordinated with educational agencies located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The proposed solution will expand the mission and accessibility of CAREI. It will provide resources to policymakers and educational agencies throughout the state; especially those in rural and high-need communities who were historically underserved. CAREI will enable the use of evidence and data at all levels of the education system and foster high-value partnerships. In its expanded role, CAREI will continue as an impartial and independent hub for applied research and educational improvement. CAREI will bring others together to define their values, goals, objectives, policies, and programs. It will provide services and resources to facilitate high-quality research, evaluation, and assessment practices among its partners. We have set an ambitious goal that we want our services to impact 80 percent of school districts within three years!

One of the ways we can impact school districts is through the CAREI District Assembly. Districts who belong to the CAREI District Assembly receive many benefits including:

- Participation in four, half-day Assembly networking meetings wherein districts share issues and strategies for dealing with today’s complex educational reforms. Assembly meetings are accessible online, as well as in person, so you can choose to participate in the discussions from your office.
- Participation in the Assembly to help guide the emerging vision of CAREI.
- Participation in the Assembly that collaboratively defines our annual goals to provide services to member districts, for example: literature reviews, survey design, data analysis, needs assessments, and evaluations.
- Access to the monthly “Research Watch” electronic newsletter. Each issue highlights a summary of research studies published that will be of interest to you as a district leader. Topical areas include leadership, social-emotional learning, teaching and learning, assessment, and unique learners.
- Linkage to other resources in the University of Minnesota.
- Access to “Members Only” section of the new CAREI website where valuable resources will be shared.

CAREI membership is one of the best ways that a school district can stay connected to the emerging knowledge about educational policy and practice. We sincerely hope that you will join our collaboration. You can enroll your district in the District Assembly via the CAREI Website at https://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei. Carei membership is one of the best ways that a school district can stay connected to the emerging knowledge about educational policy and practice. We sincerely hope that you will join our collaboration. You can enroll your district in the District Assembly via the CAREI Website at https://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/member-registration.html.

Kim Gibbons, Ph.D., is the Associate Director of CAREI. CAREI is the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota. Learn more about CAREI at https://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei. Contact Kim about this article at kgibbons@umn.edu.
In Minnesota, the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA) provides a framework within which school districts must negotiate with their organized employees. For example, PELRA (M.S. 179A.20, Subd. 3.) states, “the duration of the contract is negotiable but shall not exceed three years. Any contract between a school board and an exclusive representative of teachers shall be for a term of two years, beginning on July 1 of each odd-numbered year. A contract between a school board and an exclusive representative of teachers shall contain the teachers’ compensation including fringe benefits for the entire two-year term and shall not contain a wage reopening clause or any other provision for the renegotiation of the teachers’ compensation.” Therefore, school boards should be in the process of beginning to prepare for the upcoming round of negotiations with their teachers’ bargaining units.

One of the first steps in preparing for negotiations is determining who will be representing the school board at the negotiations table — a committee of the school board, administrators, legal counsel, etc. Once the bargaining team is identified, the bargaining team will need to select a spokesperson who will be the point of contact during negotiations. School board members should refer all questions concerning negotiations to the designated spokesperson.

If school board members will be sitting at the negotiations table, they need to gather information to assist them in identifying key issues which the school board should take into consideration when developing its negotiations strategy. Members of the bargaining team can gather information in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, the following:

- Meet with the administrative staff responsible for administering the existing Master Agreement and discuss any particular language that is burdensome or that limits the staff’s ability to govern the schools;
- Review any grievances that have occurred during the term of the existing Master Agreement to determine if any Master Agreement language needs to be revised; and
- Review legislation from the past two legislative sessions that has been repealed, passed, or amended (e.g., M.S. 181.9413) that may impact existing Master Agreement language.
The school board also needs to decide if it will have the existing Master Agreement analyzed. Such an analysis can identify ambiguous language or potential pitfalls, offer recommendations for alleviating problems, and offer language suggestions that would help strengthen management rights and position.

Once the bargaining team has gathered internal school district information, it needs to determine which school districts it will use as “comparable school districts” and begin gathering comparative data. The comparative data allows the school district to see how it matches up against the identified comparative school districts, and it may serve as a starting point for developing the school district’s financial proposals. Remember, the school district’s bottom line should be the ultimate factor when negotiating the financial aspects of the upcoming Master Agreement.

Finally, once all the internal school district and comparative data has been gathered, the school board should establish its bargaining goals, parameters, and proposals, and develop a strategy to follow during the negotiations process. The school board’s proposal(s) should be used to clarify ambiguous language, correct abuses or problems, retain or restore managerial control/flexibility, or seize a tactical advantage. Therefore, the school board’s proposal(s) will need to be supported by facts, and the school board should document any misuse, abuse, costs, or other data that will provide it with a fact-based proposal. The school board should hold strategy sessions to discuss and plan its approach to negotiations. The Open Meeting Law (OML) permits the school board, by a majority vote in a public meeting, to hold a closed meeting to consider strategy for labor negotiations, including negotiations strategies or development, or discussion and review of labor negotiation proposals with certified bargaining units. However, as a reminder, PELRA (M.S. 179A.14, Subd. 3.) requires all other negotiations meetings to be public unless otherwise provided by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Mediation Services (BMS).

To further help the school district’s negotiations team prepare for upcoming negotiations, MSBA will be offering a “Bargaining Basics” Early Bird Session in conjunction with its annual Leadership Conference on Wednesday, January 11 in Minneapolis and regional Negotiations Seminars kicking off at the end of January (see schedule above). The “Bargaining Basics” Early Bird Session will introduce attendees to the complex world of negotiations, including an overview of PERLA and the OML. The Negotiations Seminars will dive deeper into negotiations, and representatives from MSBA’s staff and the BMS will be presenting. Stay tuned for more information regarding the “Bargaining Basics” and Negotiations Seminars.

Amy Fullenkamp-Taylor and Bill Kautt are MSBA’s Associate Directors of Management Services. Contact Amy at ataylor@mnmsba.org and Bill at bkautt@mnmsba.org.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 31</td>
<td>Fergus Falls - Lakes Country Service Cooperative</td>
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<td>Wednesday, February 1</td>
<td>Thief River Falls - Quality Inn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, February 2</td>
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According to state statutes, on the first Monday of January of each year, or as soon thereafter as practicable, the school board must meet and organize by selecting a board chair, a clerk and a treasurer, who shall hold their offices for one year and until their successors are selected and qualify. Below are commonly asked questions regarding the organizational meeting, and the answers. For additional information, see MSBA’s “The First Monday in January” booklet at http://www.mnmsba.org/FirstMondayInJanuaryBooklet (log in required).

**QUESTION: Since our school board chair from last year wasn’t elected, who should run the board meeting?**

**SANDY GUNDLACH:** If the chair elected last year is no longer on the school board, the most recently selected vice chair (if the school board has one) should run the board meeting. If your board doesn’t have a vice chair, then the most recently selected clerk or treasurer, in that order, should call the board meeting to order and run the meeting. If none of the previously selected officers are still on the school board, or all are unavailable to attend the board meeting, the school board should select one of its remaining members to run the meeting. Because the superintendent is an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the school board, the meeting should not be run by the superintendent.

**QUESTION: What happens if more than one board member is nominated for chair and the voting is either tied (for example, 3-3 or 3-3-1), or no board member gets a majority of the votes?**

**SG:** If a tie vote exists between two candidates nominated for chair, the school board should vote a second time, and, if needed, a third vote should be taken prior to the close of the meeting. If the school board is still unable to elect a chair, the election of a chair should occur at subsequent board meetings, for as many board meetings and votes as may be required, until one candidate is elected chair. In addition, if the second vote to elect a chair is unsuccessful, the school board could decide to move on to elect the other officers before attempting to vote a third time to elect a chair, or, the school board could move on to conduct the other business before attempting to vote a third time to elect a chair before adjourning the meeting.

Remember, all school board meetings must be held in compliance with Minnesota’s Open Meeting Law. For this reason, all votes cast must occur in an open meeting. School board members may not cast any straw votes or votes by secret ballot. All school board members’ votes must be recorded and made available to the public.

**QUESTION: What happens if there’s a six-member school board with a 3-2-1 split vote, or what if someone abstains from voting?**

**SG:** Abstentions are considered to be acquiescence to the vote of the majority. In other words, abstentions count with the majority vote on an issue.

**QUESTION: Can I nominate myself for chair, or any other officer position?**

**SG:** Yes. Any school board member can nominate another school board member, including himself/herself.

Contact Sandy Gundlach at sgundlach@mnmsba.org. Submit Ask MSBA questions to Bruce Lombard at blombard@mnmsba.org (include “Ask MSBA” in the subject line).
George Kimball brings a great deal of education experience to the MSBA Board of Directors. George joined the MSBA Board in 2014. As Director of MSBA Director District 6, he represents school board members in the northeast-metro portion of the state.

George was born in Minneapolis and raised in Hutchinson and White Bear Lake. After graduating from White Bear Mariner High School in White Bear Lake, he received a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Minnesota. George then attended Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota (in Winona) where he earned a master of arts degree and completed the principal licensure program.

George is currently the Director of Adult Education for the Minnesota Department of Corrections, which headlines his impressive educationally oriented résumé. Prior to his present position, George worked as an educator director for Minnesota correctional facilities (state prisons) in Shakopee and Rush City, as the education programming supervisor for the Minnesota Historical Society and an assistant principal at Hudson High School (Wisconsin), and was a teacher/coach for White Bear Lake Area and Stillwater Area schools.

In the following Q-and-A, George reflects on how his son helped sway him to run for the school board, offers great advice for new school board members, and addresses the biggest issues school districts are facing today.

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

**GEORGE KIMBALL:** My son and his good friend had been involved for a few years in political races, mostly in losing causes, and the two of them approached me in early 2005 with their idea of being co-managers of my school board campaign. Around the same time I had been thinking about how I might best contribute my time and abilities to provide service to the community. Given that my education and experience was in education,
and I have many friends and family in this community, and have nephews and nieces (and now children of my nephews and nieces) attending school in the district, school board service seemed like a good potential fit. I did not have any special interest or any argument against how the district was being run; rather, I just wanted to contribute.

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

**GK:** Effective school board members constantly remind themselves that they are serving their community and, especially, the current and future students of their district. Serving on the board can never be “about me.” Rather, board members need to work collectively and as a team toward common goals. Members can have the biggest impact by doing their homework and becoming as knowledgeable as possible — on a macro level — about key district operations including instruction, finance, policy and personnel.

**MSBA:** What is the biggest challenge for school board members?

**GK:** There are a couple of “biggest challenges” I have seen during my tenure on the board, and these challenges seem fairly common to boards across the state. First, if not careful, board members can lose sight of their role (hiring and evaluating the superintendent, establishing policy, strategic planning, etc.) and start getting involved in day-to-day management of the district, mistakenly seeing themselves as members of the administration, and digging into details and specifics of district operations and processes. Second, it can sometimes be tempting for a board member to focus on a particular issue or advocate for a special interest cause, and thereby become sort of a single interest member. We have to monitor this carefully, and constantly evaluate which “lens” we are using when considering district issues, actions and initiatives. Board members need to set aside personal bias and interests in favor of the collective interests of the students, district and community. Further, once a decision is made it is absolutely critical that the entire board move forward in unified support, speaking in one voice.

**MSBA:** Are there any specific issues that are currently affecting your MSBA Director District?

**GK:** In MSBA Director District 6, the issues are mostly similar to districts across the state, and especially in other metro areas. We are not seeing significant progress in narrowing the often mentioned “achievement gap,” but some districts are attempting to attack this issue in new and innovative ways. Also, there is frustration as the state, in our view, continually fails to fulfill its constitutional obligation to adequately and equitably fund public education. We believe that the state needs to step up to substantially reduce the special education cross-subsidy and index the basic formula to inflation. Further, districts in our
area and throughout the state are forced to rely on voter-approved operating referenda just to maintain the current level of operations, and we advocate that, at minimum, school boards should be allowed the authority to renew our existing operating referendums. Another challenge continues to be finding quality teachers who are licensed in certain hard-to-fill instructional areas. Part of this issue is related to the current statutory laws and rules regarding teacher licensure, as well as to the perceived need to reshape the role and relationship between the Department of Education Licensing Division and the state Board of Teaching.

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

**GK:** There are many rewarding things, but two come to mind immediately. First, and foremost, when students and/or teachers demonstrate their passion and engagement in a district program or initiative, and, further, that program or initiative’s success is documented with data or achievement of other identified criteria. Second, it has been very rewarding, personally, to represent District 624 and the east-metro area on state and metro-education organizations and committees such as MSBA and AMSD, and a number of legislative task forces.

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

**GK:** Enter into your service as a board member with an open mind and heart, and with the assumption that all stakeholders — students, parents/guardians, teachers, support staff, administrators, community partners, and all others — have positive and genuine intentions and the best interests of the district in mind. And remember that your job is, as a member of the school board team, to help steer the ship to make the most of all of the amazing talent and resources available in your district.

**MSBA:** What do you like most about being on the MSBA Board? Why is MSBA valuable to board members?

**GK:** As a board member, I have the privilege of working with the dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled MSBA staff — as well as the benefit of meeting regularly with the talented Board of Director members from throughout the state.

If there is a question or issue related to school board governance, MSBA is right there with a quick response and tons of expertise. MSBA is highly regarded by the Legislature and governor’s office, and its lobbyists/advocates are deeply respected and listened to at the state Capitol. MSBA is in front and on top of education issues, and board members throughout the state can and should look to MSBA for guidance and direction in school board best practices and in advocating for education reform.

I’m so proud to be associated with this valuable and important education organization. A special acknowledgement and shoutout to MSBA’s amazing Deputy Executive Director, Tiffany Rodning.

Bruce Lombard is MSBA’s Associate Director of Communications. Contact him at blombard@mnmsba.org.

George Kimball (far right) began serving on the White Bear Lake Area School Board in 2006.
Family: Wife, Shen Fei; stepson Huan (age 23); son Nick, who is married to Gannet; granddaughter Helena (3); grandson Isaac (1); and daughter Angie, who died of cancer in 2008.

Also considered family: BeiBei (19), “who has lived with us for four years” and now attends UW-River Falls; Miao (17), “our niece who has lived with us for three years” and is a senior at New Life Academy; and DangDang (14), “who is living with us this year and is a foreign exchange student ninth-grader attending New Life Academy. All three are native Chinese.”

High school: White Bear Mariner (no longer in existence as it merged with White Bear Lake High School in 1983)

Favorite movies: “Groundhog Day,” “A Few Good Men” and “The Princess Bride”


Favorite music: Brandi Carlisle, Judy Garland, Alicia Keys, Christmas songs and the Smothers Brothers

Fun fact:
• When I was a kid, I had a two-speed bike.
• I have attended the last three Olympic Games (Beijing, London and Rio de Janeiro) and plan to attend Tokyo in 2020 and future Olympics for as long as possible.
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Telin Transportation Group
Bus sales

The Center for Efficient School Operations
Consulting services to school districts in the areas of facilities, health and safety, and transportation

The Retrofit Companies
Energy-efficient lighting consultants and environmental solutions

Tremco Incorporated
Roofing products/weatherproofing services

TSP Architects and Engineers
Planning, architecture and engineering

UCare
Statewide retiree health insurance

Unesco, Inc.
Master facility planning

Vaaler Insurance, Inc.
Insurance

Virco, Inc.
Classroom and office furniture

VS - America, Inc.
Classroom furniture/dynamic, flexible solutions

W. L. Hall Company
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Webber Recreational Design, Inc.
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Wenck
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Wendel Architecture
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Widseth Smith Nolting
Architecture, engineering, land surveying, and environmental services, with six offices serving school districts throughout Minnesota

Winkelman Building Corp.
Construction management

Wold Architects and Engineers
Architectural and engineering services

Writeboard
Glass writing boards

YHR Partners, Ltd.
Architecture services
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 e-mail 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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<td>763-545-3731, Fax 763-325-3289</td>
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<td>DLR Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>612-977-3300, Fax 612-977-3600</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAPC Architects Engineers</td>
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<td>Hallberg Engineering, Inc.</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.hallbergengineering.com">www.hallbergengineering.com</a></td>
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A few months ago, I wrote about the 200 Series of the model policies and recommended that school boards review these policies, adopt helpful language they might be missing, and revise policies that no longer fit with actual practice. This column will focus on one of these policies — 208 Development, Adoption, and Implementation of Policies. This is the model policy that establishes the process for school boards to adopt, revise, and put their policies into practice.

Many of the provisions in Policy 208 are MSBA’s recommended best practice. For example, no law exists on requirements for “readings” of new or revised policies before adoption. The proposed policy or policy revision does not need to be read at the meeting, but should be placed on the agenda and made available to the board members and the public.

School boards must follow their own policies. If the MSBA model language from Policy 208 has been adopted, the school board must bring new policies and policy changes to two board meetings before adoption at a third meeting. The reason is so the community members, including the staff and students, have an opportunity to comment or object.

Exceptions are provided in the model language. If the school board faces a situation where it needs to adopt a policy immediately, such as a legislative deadline for adoption, they can do so. The opportunities for public comment must be provided after the adoption and then the policy reaffirmed following the two readings. Another exception is if a policy is modified because of a law change over which the school board has no control. In this situation, the policy revisions may be adopted at the meeting in which they are presented.

Also, if a policy is revised with only minor changes that do not affect the substance of the policy, such as a change to legal references or a correction of a typographical mistake, those non-substantive changes may be adopted at the first meeting when they are presented.

Model Policy 208, the second to the last paragraph, is where the list of policies that require annual review is found. For some policies, this annual review is required because the law contains these requirements. For others, the language within the policy requires this review, or the state of the law and circumstances are changing rapidly so annual review is prudent.

Finally, Policy 208 gives the superintendent authority to act appropriately in circumstances when no policy exists to guide the administration’s action. If this happens, the superintendent is to inform the school board of the action taken, and the need for a policy, and propose recommended policy language.

Please review Model Policy 208 if you have not already done so. As always, call or email with your questions.

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