Distance Legislating
Public School Students’ Vision for Education
The MSBA Interview — Dr. Deb Henton

Summer Seminar
“Access and Inclusion Matters”
August 2020
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As I write my column on the last afternoon in May (which you are now reading months later), the events of this spring will be in the rearview mirror. Or maybe they won’t! I have started this article so many times over the past couple weeks — and then another challenging world event happened, and my focus changed.

The first part of March, almost in an instant, the world of our education system was turned topsy-turvy due to a world pandemic. School boards, administrators, teachers, and support staff were challenged with providing distance learning and support services for all our students.

Each of us has unique stories to share about the impact this pandemic had on our districts, our students, and our staff. In my district of Jordan, we felt that we had a bit of an advantage since we had implemented distance learning snow days a couple years ago, so our administration and teachers were somewhat prepared to transition to the new model.

However, just like most of you, we found a few students who didn’t respond to any communications from the district. Our staff did a stellar job of seeking out those students and trying to connect with them. We had some students who did not have the internet capabilities needed, and we provided hot spots to service those families. After a time, we saw the “novelty” of distance learning wane for some students who were “just done with online distance learning.” This was a small group of students, but certainly ones that we needed to connect with to help them get “over the line.”

We were especially worried about students for whom school was their safe space, knowing that home was not always the best environment for them. The social-emotional health of students who were not able to be with friends and caring staff was a great concern for all of us. Together we worked through many new situations.

In light of COVID-19, we tried our best to offer a memorable graduation ceremony for our seniors, who had missed out on so many end-of-high-school events — like prom, concerts, sports and awards ceremonies. In my district, our students and families did a drive-up ceremony, with the families driving up to Jordan High School. Students were able to get out, get pictures taken, walk across a make-shift stage, receive their diplomas with appropriate social distance precautions, and return to their family cars. Our district also had a professionally done graduation video made with speeches and photos of the graduates’ memories over their high school career, as well as specific photos of each graduate with their achievements listed.

And then, the tragic and senseless murder of George Floyd and the ensuing peaceful protests and sadly violent riots overshadowed all the successes of our students, graduates and districts. How do we as adults wrap our heads around all these unprecedented events? And more importantly, how do we ever protect our students and help them understand any of these events? More than ever, our students need the support of caring educators to help them and their families make sense of the senseless.

We are now on summer break and will have little contact with our students and their families. As we plan for the fall, the stress of the unknown, wondering what school in the fall will look like weighs heavily on all of us. If we go back to normal school, some will be upset. If we go back to total distance learning, some will be upset. If we go to a hybrid model of distance learning, some will be upset. It feels like a no-win situation for us. It is understandable that families will have mixed feelings about whatever we do come September. Nothing will be normal. The important thing is that we need to support our administrators, our staff, our families, and our communities. It is vital that everyone be understanding and be kind and try to help us all get through these unprecedented times together.

I pray that together we can do everything possible to continue the important job and responsibility we must provide the best education for all our students that we can. My hope is that we can support one another in whatever our roles are in our district and that we can make this a better world for all. Best of luck as we prepare and move into another school year. After witnessing the resilience of our graduates, I have great hope for our future world to work with us on this journey.

Contact MSBA President Deborah Pauly at dpauly@isd717.org.
**CALENDAR**

**JULY 2020**

4 ............ Independence Day (No meetings)
14 .......... MSBA Charter School Board Workshop (Virtual event)
14 .......... MSBA Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I Workshop (Virtual event)
17 .......... MSBA Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I Workshop (Virtual event)
21 .......... MSBA Charter School Board Workshop (Virtual event)
21 .......... MSBA Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II Workshop — Part 1 (Virtual event)
28 .......... MSBA Charter School Board Workshop (Virtual event)
28 .......... MSBA Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II Workshop — Part 2 (Virtual event)
31 .......... MSBA Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II Workshop — Part 2 (Virtual event)

**AUGUST 2020**

5 ............ MSBA Summer Seminar (Virtual event)
9 ............ MSBA Board of Directors Meeting
12 .......... MSBA Summer Seminar (Virtual event)
19 .......... MSBA Summer Seminar (Virtual event)

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

8 ............ MSBA Advocacy Tour (St. Peter and Marshall)*
9 ............ MSBA Advocacy Tour (Staples and Fergus Falls)*
10 .......... MSBA Advocacy Tour ( Thief River Falls)*
15 .......... MSBA Advocacy Tour ( Cloquet and Sartell)*
16 .......... MSBA Advocacy Tour ( Grand Rapids and Willmar)*
17 .......... MSBA Advocacy Tour ( Rochester)*
19 .......... MSBA Advocacy Tour (Metro)*

* Advocacy Tour meetings will be held remotely if current health guidance prevents in-person meetings.

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**COVER ART:**

Milena H., 2nd Grade

MSBA thanks art teacher Stephanie Wolff and her students from Washington Elementary School in Mankato for sharing their art in this issue.

Contact MSBA’s Bruce Lombard at blombard@mnmsba.org if you’d like to see your students’ art displayed in a future MSBA Journal magazine.
While the delivery method for the 2020 MSBA Summer Seminar may be vastly different from our traditional event, the high caliber of keynote speakers and relevant content of our breakout sessions will continue to be offered to our members.

The 2020 Summer Seminar will be presented in a virtual format during three evenings in August over the course of three consecutive weeks and repeated the following mornings.

This year’s theme is “Access and Inclusion Matters: Throughout COVID-19 and Beyond.” The seminar will highlight critical, relevant, and timely subject matter that will emphasize educational equity as well as the impact COVID-19 has, and will continue to have, in our schools.

Opening keynote speaker Dr. Jennifer Ulie-Wells will cover “Ways for School Boards to Improve School Mental Health” on Wednesday, August 5.

Then, on Wednesday, August 12, attendees can choose to attend two of four breakout sessions — featuring topics on communication, race, legislative advocacy, and superintendent evaluation.

Finally, on Wednesday, August 19, closing keynote speaker Verjeana Jacobs from the National School Boards Association will present “Our Collective Challenge: Providing a Truly Equitable Education for Every Child.”

Please note: Each Wednesday evening session will be recorded and will be available to watch the following Thursday morning, respectively.

Check out the rest of the Summer Seminar Preview for more details about this year’s keynote speakers and breakout sessions.

Visit the MSBA website at www.mnmsba.org/SummerSeminar to access registration information.
Opening Keynote Address: “Ways for School Boards to Improve School Mental Health”

**Presenter:** Dr. Jennifer Ulie-Wells, Executive Director of Please Pass the Love

**When:** 6 p.m. Wednesday, August 5, 2020

**Synopsis:** There is a mental health epidemic facing schools across the nation. Comprehensive school mental health systems build the foundations for schools to be able to create thriving environments and develop sustainable supports. Dr. Jennifer Ulie-Wells’ keynote address will highlight how school boards can improve the mental health of our students, staff, and families.

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**Getting Boards on Board to Improve School Mental Health**

**Keynote speaker:** School boards need to educate themselves on culturally responsive school mental health, closely evaluate disciplinary data

_By MSBA Staff_

The 2020 MSBA Summer Seminar kicks off with a virtual meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, August 5, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Jennifer Ulie-Wells’ presentation of “Ways for School Boards to Improve School Mental Health.”

Dr. Ulie-Wells has a Ph.D. from Iowa State University in Education with certifications in mental health and social justice. She has been an educator for more than 20 years.

Each year, Ulie-Wells trains thousands of educators, young people, families, and community providers on a variety of school mental health topics. In 2018, she launched an online school mental health program in collaboration with Drake University and Iowa State Education Association (ISEA).

She has served on a variety of behavioral health related state committees with the Iowa Department of Education and was an Iowa Family Leadership Training Institute Mentor through the University of Iowa, Department of Pediatrics. Her research focuses on racial and marginalized

*continued on page 8*
trauma as school mental health.

Last but certainly not least, Ulie-Wells is also a West Des Moines School Board member.

**MSBA: What is school mental health?**

**DR. JENNIFER ULIE-WELLS:** School mental health is a comprehensive field designed to create sustainable systems with high levels of prevention and intentional intervention strategies to improve the mental health of students, families, and staff.

School mental health is not simply a therapist going to school, it’s far more than that. The field encompasses a variety of approaches, topics, and strategies including school climate and culture, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), trauma-informed care, suicide prevention, racial and cultural trauma, social-emotional learning, reducing behaviors, self-care, discrimination of identities, and more.

We seek to set up systems in which we create high levels of prevention, training, relationship building, and much more to support the needs of all students. Then, as students have more intensive needs, we use data to help inform appropriate interventions to meet those needs. It maximizes on collaborative relationships with students, staff, families, and community providers.

**MSBA: What can school board members do improve school mental health?**

**ULIE-WELLS:** School board members need to be aware that the policies we make, especially disciplinary, can be counterproductive to the mental health of students, staff, and families and only exacerbate situations. Our goals should center around wanting to see students, families, and staff thriving, so sometimes we need to shift how we’ve always done things in exchange for evidence-based practices that actually allow our students, families, and staff to get their needs met to thrive.

The first thing any board member can do is educate themselves on culturally responsive school mental health and then engage with the very robust school mental health community and advocates across Minnesota. Dr. Mark Sander, Director of School Mental Health for Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Schools, is one of the nation’s leading experts on school mental health.

**MSBA: What do board members need to know about the impact that COVID-19 will have on student mental health?**

**ULIE-WELLS:** Our students, families, and staff were already vulnerable trying to achieve in an underfunded, under-resourced educational system. The generational traumas for persons of color, food insecurity, limited access to health care, underfunded mental health care, and a bevy of other social issues already make the mental health of our communities fragile on a good day. COVID-19 has only exacerbated the mental health across the board of students, staff, and families. One study has projected an additional 50,000 deaths by suicide resulting from the impacts of COVID-19.

We will not be able to return to school in the fall with practice as normal. We can expect that our educational communities will be potentially struggling in a variety of ways, so as board members we need to expect that our districts will need additional mental health resources,
access to relationship building and social-emotional health opportunities, and a board that seeks to elevate the amazing work rather than using a punitive lens.

**MSBA: How do school systems impact mental health in marginalized populations?**

**ULIE-WELLS:** School professionals are not trained therapists, but they can create spaces of healing and thriving, or they can also create additional traumas for marginalized populations. School systems were not designed to benefit all demographics of students which we most predominantly see in the over-representation of disciplinary referrals for students of color. Research is clear that white students and students of color are committing similar numbers of behavioral infractions, yet students of color receive more frequent and intensive disciplinary responses which directly erode the mental health of students. One thing every school board needs to do on a regular basis is to closely evaluate disciplinary data for each school and the entire district — looking at numbers of referrals for each racial demographic.

Marginalized populations — especially students of color — face microaggressions, subtle and indirect discrimination and insults on a regular basis in classrooms, from peers and adults. Microaggressions can include everything from failing to learn to pronounce a student’s name correctly; intentionally misusing a student’s preferred pronouns; using curriculum, materials, posters that only feature European history and have white people represented; excluding students from access to activities due high financial costs; demanding students speak in English; and delegitimizing racial experience with terms such as “All Lives Matter.” These microaggressions devalue a student’s feelings of acceptance and over time weather a student’s mental health. The onus to improve student mental health falls on the adults to rebuild equitable and just systems rather than asking students to conform to policy, curriculum, and expectations that were never designed to benefit them.

**MSBA: How might our districts change their discipline policies to improve behavior in our schools?**

**ULIE-WELLS:** In 2016, Michigan enacted a state law asking districts to make restorative practices the first line in discipline over suspensions or expulsions. There are schools across the nation that have significantly reduced behavior because instead of focusing on punitive, zero-tolerance, exclusionary policies, they have established policies with high levels of prevention, opportunities for students to access help, use trauma-sensitive strategies, restorative practices, and have set up comprehensive systems that recognize students need supports to thrive — not more discipline.

There is no reason with the immense amount of research that we have and the exceptionally positive outcomes we’ve seen across the nation that districts shouldn’t be jumping to implement these best practices for students.

Dr. Jennifer Ulie-Wells is the executive director of Please Pass the Love. Learn more about Please Pass the Love at https://www.pleasepassthelove.org. Her Twitter handle is @JenniferWells23.
Summer Seminar Schedule At-A-Glance

Note: A recording of each Wednesday night session will be available for viewing the following Thursday at 9 a.m. The four breakout sessions on August 12 will also be recorded. The 6 p.m. and 7:05 p.m. breakout sessions will be available for viewing the next morning, Thursday, August 13, at 9 a.m. and 10:05 a.m., respectively.

**Week 1: Wednesday, August 5, 2020**

6 p.m. Keynote: “Ways School Boards Can Improve School Mental Health”  
**Speaker:** Dr. Jennifer Ulie-Wells, Executive Director of Please Pass the Love and West Des Moines School Board Member

7:25 p.m. Session: “From Idea to Legislation – Help Drive Change”  
**Presenters:** Denise Dittrich, MSBA Director of Government Relations; and Kimberley Dunn Lewis, MSBA Associate Director of Government Relations  
**Synopsis:** Together we will look at how different advocacy structures work throughout Minnesota. From responding to a legislative alert to building a team of advocates in your school district, we will explore how you can garner best practices and implement them in your district.

**Week 2: Wednesday, August 12, 2020**

6 p.m. to 6:55 p.m.

**Breakout Session:** “Communication Throughout COVID-19 and Beyond”  
**Synopsis:** Whether your district will try in-person classes, distance learning or a hybrid this fall, communication is a must. See some strategies to plan and keep communications open with staff, students, parents, and your community.  
**Presenters:** Barbara Nichol, APR, Founder of Barbara Nicol Public Relations; and Greg Abbott, MSBA Director of Communications and Marketing  
**Breakout Session:** “Superintendent Evaluation in a COVID-19 Reality”  
**Synopsis:** Learn what questions school boards should ask and what considerations should be made as they conduct superintendent evaluations in the middle of a pandemic.  
**Presenters:** Dr. Deb Henton, Minnesota Association of School Administrators Executive Director; and Barb Dorn, MSBA Director of Leadership Development and Executive Search

7:05 p.m. to 8 p.m.

**Breakout Session:** “The Changes We Need in a COVID-19 World”  
**Synopsis:** What could our schools look like in the future given the policy and funding implications of COVID-19? Learn more about potential legislation that we may see in response to lessons learned from distance learning.  
**Presenters:** Denise Dittrich, MSBA Director of Government Relations; and Kimberley Dunn Lewis, MSBA Associate Director of Government Relations

**Breakout Session:** “Race 101”  
**Synopsis:** Talking about race is not easy, but each of us can take a first step from where we are. In this session, participants will learn more about the history of race, common terms related to race and the impact of race in education.  
**Presenters:** Katie Klanderud, MSBA Director of Board Development; and Paula O’Loughlin, MSBA Associate Director of Board Development

**Week 3: Wednesday, August 19, 2020**

6 p.m. Keynote: “Our Collective Challenge: Providing a Truly Equitable Education for Every Child”  
**Speaker:** Verjeana Jacobs, Esq., National School Boards Association Chief Equity and Member Services Office

7:25 p.m. Session: “Case Law Update”  
**Presenter:** Terence Morrow, MSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services  
**Synopsis:** This session will review recent court cases, administrative opinions, and other legal updates affecting Minnesota’s school districts and charter schools.
Unpack the Backpacks
\[\text{Fight “equity fatigue” to lighten the load for children}\]

\textit{By Verjeana M. Jacobs, National School Boards Association Chief of Equity Programming and Member Services}

Stuffed backpacks can appear heavier than the children who lug them to school each day. What’s in those backpacks? Books, homework, maybe lunch, maybe a favorite thingamajig — and so much more.

As a now “recovering” school board member and a retired corrections professional, I’ve learned a lot about what’s in those backpacks. The 1.8-mile physical connection between the former-elementary-school-turned-school-board office and the department of corrections in my experience may have been serendipitous but the truth of that connection is part of my reality.

Two very vivid scenes collide in my head: First, children swaying side to side, leaning forward, trying to balance all of the “stuff” stacked on their backs. Second, the surreal thunderous clanking sound of heavy doors opening and closing at the jail.

Socioeconomic status, race, gender, trauma, and the all-too-often interference of political structures weigh heavily on the backs of America’s children. These are the complex barriers to successful outcomes. These barriers must be unpacked.

While hosting an annual back-to-school fair where the district gives excited students backpacks filled with school supplies and giveaways, I envision the children who are weighted down by the perils of poverty, racial inequity, broken families, substance abuse, trauma, and hopelessness.

\textit{continued on page 12}
According to a 2015 Huffington Post article, in 2006, 31 percent of America’s students attended schools in “high-poverty” districts. By 2013, however, this number jumped to over 49 percent, according to an analysis of U.S. Census estimates from the nonprofit EdBuild.

According to the National Survey of Children’s Health, nearly 35 million U.S. children have experienced one or more types of childhood trauma. That’s almost half of the nation’s children.

As educational equity leaders, scholars and advocates, we too carry backpacks. After all, this is our life’s work. We often eat, sleep, and breathe the impacts of poverty, race, trauma, discipline, failure of access, failure of understanding, issues of teacher effectiveness, and political discourse around policies and practices. Our backpacks are full, and far too many times don’t stand under the pressure.

This work on behalf of children is often exhausting and sometimes anguishing. I recently read an article entitled “Equity Fatigue and How it Affects Leaders of Color.” It describes how, after months of training and discussion about issues of systemic injustices, inequities, racism, etc., a participant joked, “Can we just do something simple like learn how to write a grant proposal?”

This same article coined the idea of equity fatigue as “equatigue” and defined it as “the feeling of exhaustion, frustration, and occasional hopelessness experienced by systemically marginalized individuals and communities after prolonged periods of thinking and talking about the oppression they face.”

This also reminded me of a recent conversation I had with a colleague for whom I have much respect, who asked “But how are we inspired, Verjeana?” It is laborious enough to acknowledge societal ills, but seeing its negative influence on children can be overwhelming.

It is sometimes difficult to find inspiration when bombarded constantly with the ugly truth of systemic inequities. However, multiple bursts of encouragement, evidence of change, inspiring stories, and camaraderie towards the shared goal of working to ensure the promise of each child, gives energy and inspiration to keep us motivated, to keep us going.

School boards, superintendents, educators, and education advocates across this nation are the MVPs with the will, skill, and courage to eliminate barriers for children. School boards with their governance authority have the capacity to create change and save lives.

The brightest kid with the best curriculum cannot learn in
the face of persistent obstacles. To save a child’s life, we must unpack the backpacks. Children are shaped by their experiences at home and in school. We can help them build on their experience as a prize of their future rather than as a deficit. School experience significantly impacts the life of a child.

We are in this with you. We are ready to do our best work by unpacking children’s backpacks, alleviating barriers, and lessening the load so they can stand firm, unwavering and steadfast in their re-solve. Lighten the backpacks through policies and practices that ensure equitable allocation of resources designed to provide access and opportunity for every child.

Verjeana M. Jacobs is the National School Boards Association’s Chief of Equity Programming and Member Services. You can contact her at vjacobs@nsba.org.

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The 2020 Minnesota legislative session adjourned at midnight May 18. This session will go down in history as the “COVID-19 session” — one that was suddenly turned upside down by the outbreak of a worldwide pandemic and a statewide executive stay-at-home order that made conducting legislative business challenging. Within days, remote committee hearings replaced face-to-face meetings — and floor sessions were marked with social distancing, some members wearing masks and others voting remotely.

As the session began on February 11, there was a positive budget balance of $1.5 billion and an optimistic economic outlook. By mid-March, legislators realized the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the state’s economic forecast and called on Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) to provide an updated budget projection. Minnesota’s initial positive budget outlook plummeted to a $2.4 billion projected budget deficit.

What began as a typical legislative session now became focused on measures to address legislation related to COVID-19 in a bipartisan manner.
What does this mean for education?

The impact, or response to the COVID-19 pandemic, hit education in Minnesota in several ways. Executive orders and waivers at both the state and federal levels transformed traditional in-school, face-to-face classrooms into remote learning from home. Schools were ordered to provide child care to essential workers at no charge and to provide meals for vulnerable students. Over a period of eight days, our school leaders moved mountains to respond to Executive Order 20-2 by planning for 850,000 students to engage in distance learning.

Prior to adjournment of the session, legislators met all weekend and — in typical form — just before midnight the Legislature passed the long-negotiated COVID-19 education finance bill (HF 4415). The finance bill was signed into law — however, the education policy bill (HF 163) will not be signed into law. The policy bill passed in the House, but it was too late as the clock ran out with the Senate already adjourning sine die. For the second year in a row, education was left without a policy bill.

Here are some key highlights of the COVID-19 education finance bill:

**Student Education**
- Makes permanent the 2019 provision to expand eligibility in the Early/Middle College Programs to students not yet 21.

**Accommodations for 2019-20 School Year**
- Student absences during distance learning don’t bring a student under the definition of truant.
- Probationary teachers are exempted from completing 120 days of instruction.

**School District Accounting Practices**
- Beginning fiscal year 2021 and beyond, the requirement that districts set aside a portion of the increases in their compensatory revenue for extended time purposes is eliminated. However, 5.5 percent of fiscal year 2020 compensatory revenue must still be reserved for extended time. Any balance remaining in account 459 as of June 30 can be only used for extended time. A workaround does exist due to an executive order and the newly signed law. Districts may transfer those funds under the transfer provision.
- For fiscal years 2020 and 2021 only, any unassigned operating fund balance can be transferred to another operating fund. This action does require school board approval and requires the transfers to occur before the Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) reporting deadline. Accounting records of the fund transfer are required and allows for auditor review. Transfers cannot increase state aid or levy amounts.
- For fiscal year 2021 only, a school district, unable to make a required debt service payment because of an anticipated delay in property tax receipts, may apply for modified cash flow payments under Minnesota Statute 127A.45. The district must apply in the manner specified by the commissioner of education.
- For fiscal year 2020 only, school districts are authorized to continue to account for the hours that an employee is paid in the same UFARS salary and benefit categories as if the employee were performing the employee’s regular job functions.

**Statewide funding formula adjustments**

For fiscal years 2020 and 2021, the following statewide funding formulas will be recalculated or adjusted by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to limit revenue losses to school districts due to distance learning. A change in estimated pupil counts or change in program participation is needed to match the 2020 February Forecast.

Districts will be notified by MDE, as soon as is practicable, of these formula adjustments and in addition, a report is required to legislative committees by January 15, 2021, of the formula changes and distributional impacts on districts.

The impacted formulas are:
- School meals aid
- Regional library telecommunications aid
- Special education aid
- Career and technical aid
- Adult Basic Education aid
- Nonpublic pupil transportation aid
- Interdistrict desegregation transportation aid
- Literacy Incentive growth rate calculation aid
- School-age care aid
- Early childhood screening aid
- Achievement and Integration aid
- Community education after-school enrichment

continued on page 18
MDE compliance

- CARES Act funding must be used to help school districts comply with the governor’s executive orders, including employee compensation.
- MDE must collaborate with the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to incorporate construction and skilled trades into career counseling for middle school and high school students.
- The commissioner of education must waive the college entrance exams and statewide assessments as well as the associated reporting requirements.

Professional Educators Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) compliance

- PELSB is to issue one-year conditional Tier 3 licenses to teachers who cannot complete a required licensure exam due to COVID-19 disruptions. The renewal fee is waived. A teacher with an expiring Tier 3 license must apply and complete exams before October 31, 2020.
- For 2020, PELSB must provide a six-month extension for the completion requirements for licensure renewals.
- $49,000 allocated to update information technology (IT) systems to modify teacher licensure system to issue conditional licenses.

What did not get done?

- Bonding bill: The most important task of legislators in even-numbered years is passing a capital bonding bill — considered a jobs bill. Neither the House nor the Senate obtained the necessary three-fifths votes and so the bill failed in both chambers.
- Tax bill: Though there were several versions of a tax bill, lawmakers once again couldn’t get an agreed upon bill across the finish line.
- State employee contracts: Due to a projected state deficit, lawmakers failed to agree to ratify state employee contracts, which means the existing contract terms prevail.
- Distance learning technology and broadband: The Legislature proposed grants for emergency distance learning broadband access and equipment for school districts and charter schools. The bill also included a grant program for reimbursement for telemedicine expenditures and money for broadband expansion.
- School employees hourly wage: The House bill included the controversial provision requiring the school district’s hourly staff and contracted employees to be paid for hours scheduled — but not worked — due to COVID-19.

How much federal funding will Minnesota schools receive?

The federal government acted in April to help mitigate the economic damage from the pandemic by passing several relief packages, including the CARES Act.

The CARES Act stimulus package consists of two major education funds:
- $13.5 billion in the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER)
- $3 billion in the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER)

Minnesota will receive:
- $140 million to Minnesota schools through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER). These funds will flow through MDE with at least 90 percent going to school districts through a formula linked to Title 1 funding, which ensures that school districts with higher concentrations of low-income students will get more funding. The remaining 10 percent may be reserved for emergency needs as determined by the MDE. States must provide an assurance that they will fund K-12 education in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, at or above the average funding levels from the previous three fiscal years. To be allocated in the following manner:
  - More than $126 million to be distributed using the 2019 Title I, Part A formula. A district can predict they will receive 85 percent to 90 percent of their 2019 Title I, Part A funds. This money is likely to be very unevenly distributed among districts and some school districts will not receive any of this funding. Allowable uses are technology, summer school programming, providing meals, mental health services, and support for low-income and special needs students.
  - An amount of more than $13 million in emergency grants. Some funds will be awarded to schools that did not qualify for Title I, Part A money in 2019. Targeted uses are technology, summer school programming and mental health supports.
  - A sum of $700,000 for administration costs.

The Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) provides $43 million, which can be used for either K-12 or higher education and other education-related entities. Governor Tim Walz and his administration will use this money to make grants at their discretion to help K-12 schools and colleges that have been significantly
impacted by COVID-19. To be allocated in the following manner:

- More than $38 million for Minnesota Department of Education.
- $5 million in competitive grants for other nonprofit educational entities for technology and summer school programming.
- $5.3 million for Office of Higher Education.

Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan announced that GEER dollars will be used toward:

- Technology for K-12 students to assist their learning.
- Summer school programming for students who need additional support over the summer months.
- Wraparound services for students as would be provided in a full-service community school.

What’s next?

During the regular session there was some discussion around greater legislative oversight of how MMB would spend the nearly $2 billion in aid under the CARES Act. Unfortunately, that discussion didn’t happen in the first special session, that was called on June 12 and completed on June 19. The education policy bill (SSHF 33) was approved by the House on a 117-9 vote and was unanimously agreed to in the Senate. (The bill was on its way to Governor Walz’s desk for signature as this issue went to press.)

If the bill is signed, the new law will:

- clarify contracts for fuel or transportation.
- modify district reporting requirements for dyslexia.
- require vaping instruction for middle school students.
- require procedures for disposal of drugs.
- allow a district to conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA).
- allow special ed students to participate in Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instruction Services (ADSIS).
- prohibit districts from dismissing pre-K students.
- allow for different mechanisms to verify student age.
- add an alternative deadline for developmental screening.

At press time, we are still without bonding and tax bills. Also, after days of discussions and negotiations, a police accountability and reform bill were still a ways from agreement. After any additional special sessions, the next regular legislative session will begin on Tuesday, January 5, 2021.

We encourage you visit http://www.mnmsba.org/WeeklyAdvocate to watch the Weekly Advocate for updates.

Denise Dittrich is the MSBA Director of Government Relations and Kimberley Dunn Lewis is the MSBA Associate Director of Government Relations. Contact them at ddittrich@mnmsba.org and klewis@mnmsba.org, respectively.

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**What did the 2020 Legislature accomplish?**

- $550 million for COVID-19 relief — allocated to address the impact of COVID pandemic; mostly used for equipment and federal aid is expected to reimburse much of the cost.
- First responders worker’s compensation — employees on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic are presumed to have contracted a workers’ compensation occupational disease if they become ill with COVID-19.
- Alec Smith Insulin Affordability Act — emergency supplies for diabetics.
- Election safety and security — authorized the secretary of state to spend federal election security money to hold 2020 August primary and November general elections safely. Only allows schools as a polling place when no other location is reasonably available.
- Support for farmers and producers — providing new aid to address the needs of Minnesota’s farmers and producers.
- Tobacco 21 — raises the age to buy tobacco and vaping products to 21 to align with federal law.
- Trichloroethylene (TCE) ban — Minnesota becomes first state to ban the use of industrial solvent TCE for permitted facilities by June 1, 2022.
- Education COVID-19 Finance Bill — see article for detailed description.
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Embrace technology, flexibility, and diversity — because it’s coming!

By Meghan Chouanard, Orono High School graduate

In “Thank You for Being Late,” Thomas L. Friedman introduces a concept proposed by Eric “Astro” Teller (the CEO of Google’s X Research and Development Lab) that technology is increasing exponentially, whereas the human ability to adapt is increasing on a practically straight curve. These patterns of growth leave a gap between where technology is currently and where human adaptability is currently. Basically, humans do not have the capacity, at this point, to keep up with the ever-changing world around them. Teller’s solution is the use of constantly changing education to adapt to the new technology and the structure of the world. I kept this solution in the back of my mind as I began to consider what schools will look like in 2040.

As I believe the curriculum is the most essential, and most frequently changed, aspect of schools, I started there. At this point, globalization is inevitable. Trade, travel, and technology have made the world more interconnected than ever — and it’s only increasing. I believe that by 2040, schools will have made significant changes to their curriculum to accommodate globalization and will embrace instilling a worldly perspective in students.

The ability to speak multiple languages would facilitate the use of travel as an educational tool. Not only does international travel serve as practice for students in language classes, but it also provides students with the ability to experience history, culture, politics, and the fine arts firsthand. Students can learn a lot from textbooks,
but hands-on experiences are what make these lessons memorable. Most importantly, global travel promotes understanding and openness. Any remnant of an us-versus-them mentality is destroyed as soon as students come into contact with “them.” In a quickly changing world that emphasizes the importance of collaboration and innovation, the ability to avoid judgment and prejudice is essential.

Additionally, I believe that the curriculum of the future will place an emphasis on the development of personal skill sets such as leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork. If the biggest problem is truly that humans are unable to adapt quickly enough, the development of well-rounded individuals is likely to provide significant aid in closing the gap. These personal growth lessons could come in the form of a designated class designed to promote the creation of future leaders or become ingrained in the other subjects. For example, classes might prioritize group projects over individual work, making students learn the skill of collaboration and effective communication. Additionally, there might be classes dedicated to researching and finding solutions for issues in your community that would combine individual leadership with teamwork and creative problem-solving.

Class structure will also change slightly as technology opens up new opportunities for school districts. I think that high schools especially will have more flexible schedules. Instead of reporting to every class daily, technology would allow students to attend school a few times a week for lectures, group discussions, and labs. Other days would be used for working independently on activities and projects that would then be turned in digitally for review.

In addition to providing opportunities for group work, a more flexible class schedule would give students the chance to take on jobs, internships, and research opportunities. For students with a specific interest, they will be able to dive deeply into the subject and have meaningful experiences in their passion before entering college. For students with a less certain path, the opportunity to explore possibilities in the real world could inspire areas of study to pursue in college or the workforce.

Though technology could potentially end the need for students to report to school at all, I believe that school will remain a necessity because of the opportunities it presents for social development. In order to be effective in the workplace, students must be able to interact with their peers and authority figures. The few days students would spend at school would allow students to learn through discussion and develop friendships. These relationships would then be taken out of the classroom to collaborate on projects and experiences on off-days.

Going back to Eric “Astro” Teller’s theory, I firmly believe that the only way for human adaptability to catch up to technology’s rapid changes is to bridge the gap using education. Every generation seems to get better and better at embracing and thriving in an ever-changing environment, and I believe that the trend will continue for students in 2040. However, the next generation depends on education to fulfill their vast potential, and schools have to be prepared to continually change as well. To me, that means embracing globalization, practical skill development, and technology.

continued on page 24
What could education look like in the future?

By Bethany Tamrat, Park High School graduate (South Washington County Schools)

I know education to be the process of facilitated learning. Education ignites a passion within all students whether that is in the traditional core subjects, or in other topics that are nonconventional. Education helps us make sense of the world. But school? It is an ancient institution that stifles creativity, genuine passion, and is a breeding place for robots. Now you might say this is a harsh judgment of school, but as a student, this is something that I truly believe in. Before we can dream of what could be, we need to criticize what it is now.

Education in the future will be hopeful if there is more mindfulness of the students’ different learning styles: In the next 10 years, I hope the classroom structures in place will begin to be modified. Students won’t be in an environment where there are different levels of hierarchy between a student and a teacher. The classroom will be more active and not idle, different seating arrangements, the classroom layout will begin to reflect the outside world. One hundred years ago, students were sitting in desks in a single file line with the only way to communicate with the teacher was to raise one’s hand. Fast forward to the 21st century, nothing has changed. If you were to look at a picture of a classroom from the early 1900s, it would nearly be identical to a classroom today, with the exception of the poorly aged fashion and haircuts.

Education in the future will see technology being more present in the classroom: Instead of educators seeing it as a distraction it will be seen as a tool to enhance learning. Prince Ea, a spoken word artist, described how cell phones and cars have improved and advanced more in the past 100 years than schools. He states, “[schools] claim to prepare students for the future [but] do you prepare students for the past or for the future?” There are higher hopes for cars than education. I am confused as to why schools have stayed the same all these years. The same bell used to dismiss students, the “one size fits all” teaching method, and the same standardized test being administered.

I envision a future for education without mindless standardized testing: I believe standardized testing showcases students who are good test-takers under pressure and a time limit – exams that cover all things learned in that class, or in that grade – which essentially sets students up to cram all the knowledge to be released the day of the exam, only for it to be completely forgotten seconds later. After all, the test isn’t a way to actually assess a student’s grasp of the material, but rather assess how much short-term memory and information a student can brain dump under pressure and time.

I see a future for education as a place that is open to diversity and free of racism: As a student of color, I experienced covert and overt racism firsthand, and this is a reality for many students of color. My first language was Amharic, and English was something I had to learn. So I was placed in the English Language Learner (ELL) program, and the ELL program is a differing experience for students, very dependent on the teacher and the quality of the program in the school. For me personally, the ELL program was very transformative. I remember a lot of difficult experiences with my K-2 teachers. I felt anxious about going to school every single day as an 8-year-old. I would get in trouble for not completing my homework, but what my teachers didn’t realize was every night my dad and I would stay up late at night trying to complete her friends and family, and spending quality time with those close to her. She currently is a first-year student at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She’s in the process of figuring out what she wants to do in the future. Bethany has a big passion in all aspects for social justice — which is something she tries to implement in her everyday life. She is a firm believer in youth being more than capable of creating change, and that they are our present. To respond to Bethany’s essay, contact her at tamra009@umn.edu.
my homework. But, a lot of my homework was considered incorrect because the methods that my dad taught me were particular to Africa and Europe. In the U.S., unless it is not solved in a certain way up to their standard, it was deemed as wrong. I remember feeling treated as incompetent, illiterate, and not as fast of a learner as the other students.

Education in 2040 should also be filled with well-paid educators who make a lifelong impact on students: The thing I hated the most as a second-grader was reading. I would be pulled out of class to read with a literacy specialist, and instead of seeing any progress, I saw it as a chore. Around the end of the second grade, my ELL teacher, Ms. Siefert promised my dad and I that she would get me to love reading. I was very skeptical because I didn’t believe there were people out there who actually enjoyed reading. Fast forward to the middle of third grade, I was excellling in reading and it became my passion. The beautiful element about going to school is that some of us have been fortunate enough to cross paths with an educator that has had a lifelong impact. For me, that was Ms. Siefert. Educators like these are an important aspect of the school system because it keeps students hopeful for the future. One educator can change one’s outlook on school, which can change their outlook on education. This can be confusing to students because the two are not synonymous but often are used interchangeably.

**Summary:** In the next 20 years, I hope we will slowly abandon standardized testing and adopt a new method that instead relies on effective and not efficient learning. In the next 30 years, I hope the overall attitude of school will shift. Instead of perceiving it as a six-hour, required occurrence, it will be an environment where kids get their energy from school. An environment where students are encouraged to pursue careers that are not only focused on the typical STEM field but also push students to explore creative ventures. All fields of study are important, but STEM fields are seen as more important and valued more than social science, history, the arts, literature, etc.

There are a lot of things we as a society need to strive for more in the school system. We need to keep in mind of the kids that will be our future and at times our current changemakers. But I believe that change is near and change is soon, and we all are part of the change. I’m going to leave you all with a quote that my mentor shared with me and deeply resonates with me, “You are brilliant not because of the school system but rather in spite of it.”
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Energy efficiency in schools begins with well-insulated buildings. Making sure school buildings are properly insulated with tight building envelope will help improve your buildings’ efficiency and reduce the demand for energy.

Adding simple, low-cost solutions such as hot water pipe insulation can also decrease energy waste by preventing pipes from losing their heat to the surrounding air.

Insulating hot water pipes can also raise the water temperature 2°F–4°F higher than uninsulated pipes, allowing schools to lower their water temperature setting, which will save them money over time.

Conduct Regular Maintenance and Tune-ups
Regularly scheduled maintenance and tune-ups on HVAC systems help guarantee peak efficiency throughout the year, keeps equipment from costly disrepair and becoming hazardous, and helps extend the life of the equipment.

Maintaining steam trap operations can also improve performance and decrease energy costs. Replacements or significant repairs may be eligible for rebates from Minnesota Energy Resources, which can save you money short term while helping keep energy costs lower over time as the repaired or upgraded equipment will operate more effectively. This low-cost maintenance can add up to big savings.

Adding building controls can also help schools monitor and manage energy usage on HVAC systems and lighting. Using this technology to optimize lighting and heating system operating schedules so as not to waste energy during nights, weekends, and other unoccupied hours will result in substantial savings throughout the year.

Maintenance staff can also regularly monitor energy use trend data to see if there might be repairs or other improvements needed to help equipment run more efficiently.
Take Advantage of Rebates

Rebates from Minnesota Energy Resources are available for a wide variety of energy-saving measures, from tune-ups, steam trap replacements, and installing insulation to replacing larger equipment such as furnaces, boilers, water heaters, and food service equipment. Replacing existing equipment can be costly in the short term, but Minnesota Energy Resources offers a variety of generous rebates to help offset the upfront investment in efficient equipment, which can also lead to long-term reductions in operational budgets.

For example, the Lewiston-Altura School District recently received a $21,605 rebate check from Minnesota Energy Resources for completing a full indoor air quality renovation project. Their upgrades included the replacement and installation of high-efficiency boilers, HVAC systems, and a climate control system. While rebates can provide financial benefit in the short term, the district also completed an energy assessment and created a long-term plan for energy efficiency and continued savings by working one-on-one with a Minnesota Energy Resources advisor.

Start Saving Energy and Money Today

To learn more about where and how school districts can save on energy, it’s best to start with a professional audit. Audits not only help identify equipment that needs to be replaced, but also pinpoint behaviors that could be contributing to energy waste and offering proactive steps schools can take to avoid future inefficiencies.

Audits are relatively low in cost, and Minnesota Energy Resources offers rebates to help pay for them. Besides audits, schools can consult with Minnesota Energy Resources directly to create energy-saving plans. We can recommend opportunities for both immediate and long-term efficiencies and often design custom rebates to offset long-term project costs.

Minnesota Energy Resources is here to help school districts with tips, one-on-one advising, and a variety of money-saving rebates to help them run more efficiently. Visit us online at cashrebatesnow.com to learn more today.
The MSBA Interview — Dr. Deb Henton

New executive director of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators discusses her goals, equity, and the school board-superintendent relationship

By Bruce Lombard, MSBA Associate Director of Communications and Marketing

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) announced in January 2020 that North Branch Area Superintendent Dr. Deb Henton would become the association’s next executive director.

July 1, 2020, was the start date for Henton — replacing Dr. Gary Amoroso who retired after his nine-year run as MASA’s executive director.

Henton was the 2019-2020 MASA Past President, served for multiple years on the MASA Professional Assistance Team, and led the MASA Legislative Committee — lobbying on behalf of public education at both the state and federal levels.

Prior to her 13-year tenure in North Branch Area, Henton served as a junior and senior high school social studies teacher and assistant principal in the South Washington County School District where she was named Woodbury’s 1995 Teacher of the Year.

Henton later served as an assistant principal at Stillwater Area High School and principal at St. Paul Harding High School, where she led for five years before being promoted to St. Paul’s Executive Director of Alternative Learning Programs. While principal of Harding High School, Henton was named the 2004 MASSP Capitol Division Principal of the Year. In 2006, she was appointed the Chief of Staff for St. Paul Public Schools.

In the interview below, Henton shared her goals for MASA, her insights on the school board-superintendent relationship, and the current challenges superintendents are facing.

MSBA: What was your initial reaction upon hearing the news that you were selected as MASA’s new executive director?

DR. DEB HENTON: I thought, “I got the job! I got the job!” I was thrilled and wore a big smile for the next week! I am honored to have been selected for the position of executive director — and excited for the opportunity to serve the members of MASA in a different way than I am familiar. I also remember being grateful that MASA is a well-established organization and that I would be following an incredibly successful leader.

MSBA: While you will now be working on behalf of all of Minnesota superintendents, what will you miss most about being a superintendent yourself?

HENTON: I can only guess at this point, but I have a feeling I am going to miss the connection to all the staff that work
in a school system. I have enjoyed learning about buildings and grounds, transportation, food service, early childhood education, community education, and the other areas I had not worked with closely until I became a superintendent. Perhaps, what I will miss most is the magic of watching teachers and students share the delight of learning.

MSBA: What are your primary goals for MASA?

HENTON: My efforts will be dedicated toward serving MASA members well. I look forward to supporting their professional needs while building relationships with members from every region.

While I was MASA president, I assisted in the development of a plan to increase the number of female superintendents. I remain committed to that goal and will also focus on equity. More than ever, the inequities for students and school districts have been amplified, and we must find ways to do better for all our students across the state.

In addition, MASA’s strategic plan is expiring and I look forward to developing a process to engage members in designing a continuous improvement plan that identifies what is working and where MASA can improve. It is important to the success of the organization that all members — regardless of their position and the size of their school district — have a voice in the direction of MASA.

Finally, I will strive to ensure MASA remains the leading advocate for public education in the state.

MSBA: What insights can you give on enhancing the school board-superintendent relationship?

HENTON: School board members appreciate transparent and timely communication. I am forever considering what information school board members need so that they can make informed decisions. I share what I know and what they might anticipate. I want them to be knowledgeable so that all stakeholders trust their decisions.

I also tell staff that it is important to remember that school board members have day jobs and cannot accept every invitation. I do not set unrealistic expectations for school board members and am grateful for their dedication to the position.

I believe it is essential to be respectful of the school board-superintendent relationship and always remember the school board has the ultimate governing authority and that the superintendent as CEO is in charge of the day-to-day operations. Understanding each other’s role is essential to building a positive relationship with one another.

MSBA: How does the role of the superintendent change during a pandemic? What new challenges did you face during the end of your tenure at North Brach Area? What issues will be the biggest concern for superintendents in the immediate future?

HENTON: During this pandemic, superintendents are dealing daily with new problems they likely never imagined. They are used to dealing with a certain level of uncertainty, yet the pandemic has caused superintendents to lack the answers staff, students, families, and community members expect. Superintendents are even more worried about inequities, students lacking support at home, mental health needs of all stakeholders, funding, delivering meals, and technology — an endless list of problems to consider. I worry about the mental health of all MASA members who are working incredibly long days on complex issues during these uncertain times.

Funding and declining enrollment have been two primary challenges I have faced as superintendent. I assumed the role of superintendent at the start of the Great Recession and now end my tenure with a pandemic that is causing a rapid depletion of funds for fee-based programs. Thankfully, I have worked with incredible leaders who never lost sight of doing the very best for children no matter the circumstances we faced. We found solutions and increased offerings even during the most difficult times.

Superintendents will face funding issues, questions about how to open the 2020-2021 school year, the health and welfare of their staff and communities, and additional pandemic-related issues into the future. Yet, it is without a doubt our MASA members will rise to the challenge and provide the best education possible. They are resilient and hopeful. How fortunate I will be to assume the role of executive director of MASA in July.

Visit https://www.mnasa.org to learn more about the Minnesota Association of School Administrators.

The Henton File

Education
- Bachelor’s degree in Social Studies from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls
- Master’s degree in Education from Saint Mary’s University
- Educational Administrative Licensure from Saint Mary’s
- Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from Saint Mary’s

Honors
- 2020 — MASA Educational Leadership Award
- 2018 — Minnesota Superintendent of the Year
- 2015 — Administrator of Excellence for MASA’s Region 6
- 2014 — MASA Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award
- 2013 — Outstanding Service Award from the Minnesota Service Cooperatives
- 2011 — eSchool NewsTech-Savvy Superintendent Award
Abdi Sabrie was elected to the Mankato Area School Board in 2015 after his third run for a seat. Helen J.M. Bassett was first appointed to the Robbinsdale Area School Board in 2002, before being elected in 2003. Each of them was the first person of color to serve on their respective school boards.

Sabrie and Bassett’s community activism pre-dated their school board service. Each valued the importance of maintaining a trusted leadership between themselves and their local communities. Each was critically aware of the growing diversity in Minnesota. When Sabrie found himself wishing to connect to fellow board members of African/African American heritage in January 2016, he was pointed toward Bassett — by this time, a 13-year veteran of school board service — as a possible resource.

Support and Fellowship

Bond between Minnesota School Board Directors Helen Bassett and Abdi Sabrie sparks formation of Minnesota School Board Directors of Color fellowship group

By Helen J.M. Bassett, Robbinsdale Area School Board Member

Abdi Sabrie was elected to the Mankato Area School Board in 2015 after his third run for a seat. Helen J.M. Bassett was first appointed to the Robbinsdale Area School Board in 2002, before being elected in 2003. Each of them was the first person of color to serve on their respective school boards.

Sabrie and Bassett’s community activism pre-dated their school board service. Each valued the importance of maintaining a trusted leadership between themselves and their local communities. Each was critically aware of the growing diversity in Minnesota. When Sabrie found himself wishing to connect to fellow board members of African/African American heritage in January 2016, he was pointed toward Bassett — by this time, a 13-year veteran of school board service — as a possible resource.
Upon meeting, Sabrie and Bassett immediately found affinity. Important discussion points arose such as:

• How does one learn and share different cultural and social expectations?
• How does one become an effective advocate while building trust and relationships?
• How does one navigate being the perceived outsider?

Bassett quickly affirmed the value and role played by the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) in providing training about important rules and laws for new board members. Bassett realized there was no resource for providing fellowship and the social and emotional support needed to navigate new relationships that might include nuances and different cultural norms.

Minneapolis Public School Board Member Kim Ellison and Robbinsdale Area Superintendent Carlton Jenkins were named the first recipients of the Lighthouse Award on January 16, 2020, in Minneapolis. “The Lighthouse Award symbolizes pursuit and commitment of high-quality performance by school board members and effective administration leadership,” Helen Bassett said. “The award represents a demonstrable belief that their respective work makes a significant difference for student learning, and matters.”

Continued on page 32
while building skills and confidence to serve effectively. This recognition fostered the creation of the African Heritage School Board Directors Group.

Other directors of African heritage were identified, and special networking and programming options were offered. The fellowship soon reached beyond the African Heritage population to encourage the establishment of the Latino Heritage School Board Group. Nelly Korman (Bloomington Public Schools) and Luisa Trapero (St. James Public Schools) worked in collaboration with Abdi and Helen and were invited to join the fellowship of the Minnesota School Board Directors of Color (MNSBDOC) group.

The organization’s goals are:

- To promote good governance and effective leadership in school board service
- To encourage and support newly elected board members of color
- To advance legislation that improves public education in Minnesota
- To inspire individuals from diverse communities to aspire to school board service
- To create pathways that strengthen educational equity and inclusion.

Since 2016, Bassett led programming efforts; and she designed and produced each professional development option. At each program offering, an invitation was extended to all MSBA school board members statewide to participate in the programming, most often held simultaneous with annual MSBA meetings.

The group’s mission: Fostering excellence in good governance, supporting effective leadership, and preparing school board members from diverse communities to champion high-quality public education for all students, with a special focus on acknowledging the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of Minnesota students and families.

For more information or to comment on the article, you can reach Helen Bassett at hjbassett@aol.com.

See the MPR story about diversity on Minnesota School Boards. The MNSBDOC believes this is of vital interest to Minnesota: Follow the link at https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/09/05/diversity-grows-in-minn-schools-but-not-school-boards
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This past spring, Amanda Bomstad was named the Minnesota Secondary Counselor of the Year by the Minnesota School Counselors Association. Bomstad — a counselor at Mankato West High School — said she was surprised and honored when she heard the news.

“The acknowledgement is a testament to the work I do as an advocate for the students and families I serve as a school counselor,” Bomstad said. “I enjoy all elements of school counseling: academic selections, college and career planning, and the social-emotional development of students throughout their educational journey.”

Bomstad graduated from Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City (ACGC) High school before earning Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of Minnesota, Morris — with majors in psychology and human services, and a sociology minor. She later completed her master’s degree in professional school counseling from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

She has been a high school counselor for 15 years — her first seven with Owatonna High School and the last eight with Mankato West. She also is licensed as a K-12 principal, a position she has yet to pursue.

In addition to her state award, Bomstad was selected for consideration for national recognition through the American School Counselors Association (ASCA). Bomstad said she is currently working on completing her ASCA nomination and will head to Washington D.C., this winter for the ceremony and professional development opportunities.

**MSBA:** As a school counselor, what are the social-emotional needs that students will have to deal with over the summer and to prepare for fall classes?

**AMANDA BOMSTAD:** The mental health needs of students do not shut off like a light switch when summer hits. We have many community resources that are available to students and families. As a school counselor I am accessible to students and families via email when questions or concerns arise.

**MSBA:** What can school boards do to not only help students prepare academically, but socially, especially if co-curriculars and sports may be canceled again in the fall?
BOMSTAD: I believe that allowing for a balanced approach to the academic requirements for students is key. We want all students to be as prepared as possible for ANY path they choose after high school, whether that is a two-year or four-year college, employment, military, trade or apprenticeship programs, and so on.

Students find joy and connection with others via co-curriculars and athletic opportunities. If these programs are not able to operate on a “normal” basis, I think that educators, coaches, and mentors can think creatively to still provide that connection for students.

I am one of two advisors for our SHINE (Seeking Harmony In Neighborhoods Everyday) club at Mankato West High School. The purpose for this group is to appreciate and honor the diverse perspectives, cultures, and traditions of all students. During distance learning, we still ran virtual meetings with our student members and have already discussed options for increased connections and guest speakers if we are in a virtual setting for the fall.

MSBA: With school counselors’ plates being very full, what can counselors expect to deal with as school begins in the fall?

BOMSTAD: It is clear that we are all living in an unprecedented situation and are being affected in one way or another due to COVID-19. Many students and families are experiencing the effects of trauma living through these difficult times of the unknown and unrest. Students will be coming to school with feelings of stress, anxiety, grief, and loss, among so many other thoughts and emotions.

As a school counselor, one way I can impact a large number of students at one time is through small counseling groups. This is hands down the part of my job that I enjoy most and have for my entire career. The power of a small group of individuals who share a common bond or thread of need is an impactful experience. As a facilitator, learning and growth happens best through the group experience and thoughtful input of the students involved. I plan to continue to run a variety of groups and will plan to add the opportunity for many others to be involved if interested.

MSBA: What have you heard from your students about their thoughts/feelings about school abruptly going to distance learning — and not being able to connect with friends?

BOMSTAD: This was an abrupt change for everyone. One day we were in session as normal, and literally the next everything was different. Many of my students have stayed connected with others through social media, Google Meets, Zoom sessions, and FaceTime.

What I encourage all students to do is to reach out to at least one person outside of their immediate family each day, whether that is a friend, cousin, grandparent, or co-worker. The need to stay connected is a valued experience that one needs to harness more during this time. I also encourage students to send thank you notes to those people who have made a positive impact in their life.

The student support team at Mankato West High School created West Wellness Wednesdays during this time and each week a member of our support team created a short video with tips and strategies to stay mentally healthy at this time. We also had a “Let’s Connect” session each Wednesday at noon that was open to any student who wanted to connect with other students and support staff. I have linked two of my videos below.

https://bit.ly/BomstadVideo1

Bruce Lombard is MSBA’s Associate Director of Communications. Director questions to him at blombard@mnsmba.org.
Pivoting and Unexpected Opportunities — How Will MSBA Adapt Its Learning Opportunities?

By Katie Klanderud, MSBA Director of Board Development, and Paula O’Loughlin, MSBA Associate Director of Board Development

Change is inevitable, but these past few months are nothing like we have seen before. Like you, we needed to pivot quickly and found ourselves unexpectedly working from home. We saw the immediate need to start adapting all services to be offered online, making sure that the MSBA membership received constant communication with as much clarity and transparency as possible. Even quicker pivoting is needed when the information we receive some days changes by the hour.

Your MSBA staff has used this pivot opportunity to learn and visualize how we can get members what they need from our make-shift home office spaces. Some of it has been daunting and at the same time exciting. We could not have fathomed in March that superintendent searches could be offered remotely and that we would be hosting virtual, statewide Q & A sessions for our membership that welcomed more than 400 attendees per topic! The process has not been perfect, but we learn from the hiccups and ask for your grace as we discover how to best serve and support all of our members now and well into the future.

Question: How will MSBA be offering workshops and in-services in the future?

We are adapting MSBA’s Board Development offerings to online formats. As we get closer to the scheduled events, MSBA will determine if we are able to offer an in-person option as well. In September, we will virtually hold the “Building a High-Performance Team: Phase III” and “Representing Your Community Through Policy and Engagement: Phase IV” workshops. Watch your email and the MSBA website for dates, times, and registration.

Your Board Development Team has developed an online format for school board team in-services that has already been delivered and implemented successfully in several districts. The feedback has been great. If you are interested in an MSBA staff member meeting with your board for an in-service, to explore mutual expectations as a team, or to take part in the board team self-evaluation, please give us a call at 800-324-4459 to discuss the format and options that will work best for your board team.
**Question: Will Summer Seminar be offered in August?**

YES! This year’s Summer Seminar — themed “Access and Inclusion” — will be available in an online format that will take place over three separate evenings at 6 p.m. (August 5, August 12, and August 19). Each session will be approximately two hours in length, providing an opportunity for members to engage with our speakers and other participants. If you are unable to attend an evening session, those who have registered may view the recorded event the following Thursday morning at 9 a.m. Please visit our website at www.mnmsba.org for specific registration and speaker information. You must register in advance through your school district office.

**Question: What are the plans for the Leadership Conference in January?**

We are in constant contact with the hotels and the Minneapolis Convention Center to monitor the situation and the ability for MSBA to offer you the best and safest experience possible. Plans and protocols are being reviewed, updated, and managed according to current CDC and Minnesota Department of Health guidelines. One part of the planning equation is based on people and the other part on science. Be assured that we will make the best decision possible with the most current information from our state partners.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that change is inevitable and not equal. COVID-19 has magnified inequities for our students, staff, and for you as school board members. Not everyone has the same resources, space, access, and inclusion. Your MSBA staff is paying attention and we hear you. Virtual/online learning is not for everyone, and yet others flourish and ask for more. So, just like you and your district staff, we are looking at models that include options to help us serve everyone. As always, we invite you to connect with your MSBA staff with any questions — we appreciate your feedback.

Extending peace and grace.

Katie Klanderud is the MSBA Director of Board Development and Paula O’Loughlin is the MSBA Associate Director of Board Development. Direct questions to Katie and Paula at kklanderud@mnmsba.org and poloughlin@mnmsba.org, respectively.
Minneapolis Superintendent B.B. Jackson, with support from school board member and attorney Henry Deutsch, was going to make a stand. For almost two weeks Minneapolis schools had been closed by order of Minnesota Health Commissioner H.M. Guilford in response to the Spanish flu pandemic. The schools were bleeding about $12,000 a day to pay 2,000 teachers and staff who weren’t teaching during that span.

So on Monday, October 21, 1918, Jackson ordered all staff and students back to school in defiance of the health commissioner and city council. Parent-teacher organizations complained to the board and to the Minneapolis newspapers.

But Deutsch said the health department didn’t have the authority to shut down schools and he wanted the courts to test it.

That morning, Guilford called the school district’s bluff. As 50,000 students were returning to school in the middle of a lockdown, he met with the city attorney to seek a court order to close schools. If that failed, he threatened to order police to arrest the Minneapolis Board of Education and fine them.

A board spokesperson told the Minneapolis Star: “We shall not close the schools if they arrest us and fine us. We shall fight to the last ditch.”

Later that morning, Minneapolis Chief of Police Lewis Harthill met with the board and asked for a calm resolution to the situation to avoid the arrest of the entire school board. The board reluctantly agreed and called an end to school at noon that day.

The pandemic spread fast with two waves

The Spanish flu first made its way into the United States with a New Jersey case on September 27 – with a
returning soldier back from World War I. A week later, the flu hit Minnesota with 46 cases and seven deaths.

The health commissioner then issued an order on October 9 to shut down schools. The Minneapolis Council agreed and issued a closure order. However, St. Paul’s Health Department disagreed and kept schools – and most other businesses open much longer than Minneapolis.

Minneapolis closed schools from October 12 to November 17, and after reopening the communities, a second wave of the illness hit that caused schools to close from December 10 to December 29.

The St. Paul Health Department held that closing schools wouldn’t make a difference in the spread of the flu or the death total. It took until November 6 for St. Paul city officials to close down most businesses – schools included. The day before, the city registered 218 new cases of the flu and 36 deaths. For 10 days, both cities were clamped down. When new cases fell below 25 a day, St. Paul opened businesses and churches on November 17.

As life started to return to normal, a second wave of Spanish flu hit. It was faster and hit more people, especially school-age children and teachers. The state again called for schools to close December 10. Over the objections of the Minneapolis superintendent, the school board agreed with the health commissioner to close.

Different results for different approaches to the virus

A 2007 study from the Association of Schools of Public Health compared the results of a more strict approach from Minneapolis and a more open approach from St. Paul.

St. Paul saw much higher death rates in the first wave. So during the second wave, St. Paul’s Health Department official Dr. Simon followed more strict closing guidelines that Minneapolis had shown – despite protests from labor, movie and poolhouse owners, saloons and even bowling clubs.

Simon had taken offense to the St. Paul newspaper that he said “all but branded us as murderers for keeping the town open.”

So what were the results of tighter regulations in Minneapolis? The study’s results showed a death rate of 5.2% in Minneapolis. In St. Paul, it was almost three times as high with a 14.7% fatality rate.

Information for this article was compiled from The Minneapolis Star, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Minnesota Historical Society and the 2007 November issue of Public Health Report.
MSBA’s Vendor Directory

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

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In May 2020, the U.S. Department of Education issued an anticipated final rule that amends the federal regulations related to allegations of sexual harassment in educational institutions. The rule seeks to clarify the definitions and administrative liability that may arise in sexual harassment cases involving K-12 school districts that are Title IX recipients. The final rule goes into effect on August 14, 2020. MSBA will issue revised policies and provide additional assistance to districts before the effective date.

Sexual harassment: One of the highlighted developments centers upon the definition of “sexual harassment.” The final rule states that sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that occurs in one or more of the following situations: (1) an employee conditions provision of aid, benefit, or service on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo harassment); (2) unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would perceive as so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to an education program or activity; or (3) sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined under federal law.

Title IX Coordinator: A K-12 school district must designate an employee whose responsibilities include coordination of the district’s compliance program. This employee, who must be known as the “Title IX Coordinator,” may be an employee with other assigned duties.

Policy and notice requirements: A K-12 school district must provide notice of its nondiscrimination policy and grievance procedures, which must state that the district does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education program or activities. The notice must include the Title IX Coordinator’s phone number, office address, telephone number, and email address. The notice must appear on the district’s website and handbooks.

Reporting allegations of sexual harassment: Any person may report sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment, under the final rule. A report may be made at any time.

The final rule defines a district’s “actual knowledge” of sexual harassment as notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment that any employee
possesses. In the past, notice to a K-12 teacher of student-to-student sexual harassment was imputed to the district. The final rule expands the scope to any district employee’s knowledge.

Complainant and respondent: The final rule states that a complainant is an individual who is alleged to be the victim of sexual harassment. The complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in the district’s education program or activity at the time that the complaint is filed. The complainant may file a formal complaint. The Title IX Coordinator may sign a complaint; a third-party reporter may not file a formal complaint.

The educational institution’s response: The final rule distinguishes the requirements upon a school district when it has notice of sexual harassment and the district’s procedure for responding to a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

A school district must respond promptly to actual knowledge of sexual harassment in an education program or activity. A district must treat complainants and respondents equitably by promptly offering supportive measures to a complainant and by following a grievance process before imposing discipline or sanctions upon a respondent. Emergency removal of a respondent may be taken to protect others from an immediate threat of physical health or safety.

Additional procedural measures and requirements for the formal complaint process are set forth under the final rule. These requirements address written notice, dismissal of a formal complaint, investigation, the hearing process, determination of responsibility, appeals, informal resolution, recordkeeping, and retaliation.

MSBA is grateful to the National School Boards Association for its guidance, upon which this article draws.

Annie C., 3rd Grade
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