2024 Leadership Conference Preview

Innovative Leadership: Preparing Students for Success

Closing Session
Keynote Speaker
Ben Rudrud
“Positive Relationships and the Power of One”

Opening Session
Keynote Speaker
Hadi Partovi
“Computer Science and AI: Opportunity and Creativity”

Also in this issue ...
“Enhancing Cybersecurity in Education”
“Liberty, Bonds, and Battlefieds”
“Unlocking Literacy”
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 | INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS
Leadership Conference speakers will focus on technology and the power of positive relationships
MSBA staff

8 | CODE OF HONOR
Tech visionary and Code.org CEO Hadi Partovi to share expertise on AI and computer science in K-12 education
Bruce Lombard, MSBA Associate Director of Communications

11 | THE POWER OF ONE
Ben Rudrud to serve up heavy dose of inspiration with talk on positive relationships
Bruce Lombard, MSBA Associate Director of Communications

14 | ENHANCING CYBERSECURITY IN EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM AN EXPERT
Mark Lanterman, Chief Technology Officer of Computer Forensic Services

18 | DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
YWCA Minneapolis’ “Inc.lude” consulting aims to empower organizations to build more inclusive, productive workplaces for all
Luna Allen-Bakerian, Race Equity and Public Policy Strategist

22 | LIBERTY, BONDS, AND BATTLEFIELDS: PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS IN TURBULENT TIMES
School boards should focus on core academic skills, robust commitment to improved decision-making
Don Lifto, Consultant for School Election Strategies

26 | UNLOCKING LITERACY
A family’s journey to identify their son’s dyslexia
Kelsey Didrikson and Thor Didrikson

4 | PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE Linda Leiding, MSBA President and Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial (LCWM) School Board Member

32 | 2023 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EXHIBITOR LIST MSBA Staff

38 | ASK MSBA Amy Jordan, MSBA Executive Search Specialist

40 | VENDOR DIRECTORY

44 | LEGAL UPDATE Terence Morrow, MSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services
Looking at Public Education:
Is Your Glass Half Full or Half Empty?

By Linda Leiding, MSBA President and Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial (LCWM) School Board Member

There is that age-old question – is the glass half full or half empty? Different professions view the glass through different lenses. For example, if you are an engineer, you might see the glass as twice as big as it needs to be. A scientist may see a full glass – half full of water and half full of air. The pragmatist may see the glass as both half empty and half full, depending on how you use the water. The pessimist generally sees it as half empty, while the optimist sees it as half full.

It is relatively easy to adopt the pessimistic view. As we returned to school this year, public education faced many issues. Some schools reported shortages of teachers, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, and support staff. Over the summer, school board members faced budget deficits and the difficult decisions of cutting positions, increasing class sizes, or seeking other creative ways of balancing the budget. Education Minnesota is encouraging the teachers to request significant increases during negotiations. And then, at the last minute, there was the issue impacting the school resource officers. It can seem overwhelmingly challenging if we take a pessimistic view of public schools.

On the other hand, I had the opportunity to participate in a roundtable discussion with Glenna Wright-Gallo, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. She held a listening session in conjunction with U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona’s “Raise the Bar” tour. Minnesota Education Commissioner Willie Jett, Senator Steve Cwodzinski, Representative Cheryl Youakim, Senator Mary Kunesh, Representative Dave Pinto, Representative Laurie Pryor, Superintendent Ann-Marie Foucault from St. Michael-Albertville Schools, and representatives from MSBA, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association, Minnesota Secondary School Principals Association, Education Minnesota, Minnesota Statewide PTO, and two students were at the table. While Secretary Wright-Gallo recognized that there would be many comments on areas for improvement, she also asked for input about what is going well with public education in Minnesota.

The participants generated a wide range of topics about the excellent services provided by Minnesota public schools. Around the room, participants praised the teachers across the state who provide quality education to all students. They recognized Minnesota’s commitment to providing a meaningful career track for all students, including college preparation, career and technical education, and preparing to enter the workforce, or enroll in the armed forces. They voiced their appreciation for ensuring that special education students receive support to acquire the skills necessary to live successful adult lives. They expressed hope for our future.

Ultimately, it is our choice to determine if the glass is half empty or half full. We can belabor the point and focus on public education’s complex challenges. Or we can extol the exceptional things that are going on in each district that uphold the virtues of public education while developing a plan to address the challenges. I choose to see the glass as half full. I invite you to join me in focusing on the inherent value of public education and celebrate the examples of quality education, services, and support for all students across our state. Thank you for your dedication to ensuring the success of all students.

Linda Leiding is MSBA President and a Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial School Board member. Direct questions to Linda at leidil@hickorytech.net.
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We build educational environments that are student and staff centered. Our unique expertise in K-12 facility planning and design provides our clients with solutions that reduce costs and improve quality.
The MSBA Leadership Conference – often referred to as “the Super Bowl for school board members” – returns to Minneapolis in January.

The 2024 Leadership Conference is themed “Innovative Leadership: Preparing Students for Success” and is scheduled for Thursday, January 11, and Friday, January 12, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

This year’s conference will spotlight two phenomenal keynote speakers, a wide variety of informative workshops and roundtable sessions for school board members, and...
an Exhibit Hall loaded with many highly renowned state and national school-related vendors. The conference will also again include a School Excellence Showcase (where districts can “show off” their exemplary school programs), a Recognition Luncheon, and much more.

Opening Session keynote address: This year’s Opening Session keynote speaker is Hadi Partovi, the CEO of Code.org, who will deliver “Computer Science and AI: Opportunity and Creativity” on Thursday, January 11. Partovi will discuss the global movement to include AI and computer science in K-12 curriculum. Please see Page 8 to learn more about Partovi.

Closing Session keynote address: National-award winning keynote speaker Ben Rudrud will present “Positive Relationships First and the Power of One” during the Closing Session on Friday, January 12. Rudrud will share a powerful and uplifting keynote message to help make your schools even more amazing than they already are through positive relationships. Please see page 11 for more information about Rudrud.

Early Bird Session: Mark Lanterman, Chief Technology Officer of Computer Forensic Services, will present this year’s Early Bird Session with a talk on “Cyber Threat Awareness and Creative Strategies for Managing Risk” on Wednesday, January 10. Lanterman will provide practical suggestions for improving cybersecurity postures with proactive and reactive strategies. See Page 14 to read a related article written by Lanterman.

Recognition Luncheon: The Leadership Conference Recognition Luncheon will be held at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, January 11, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. During this awards ceremony, MSBA will give out its prestigious awards for the MSBA All-State School Board and Rising Star. Also, members of the MSBA staff and MSBA Board of Directors will acknowledge board members with notable service milestones.

Pre-conference workshops: MSBA will again offer the first three installments of its MSBA Learning to Lead Workshop Series and a Charter School Board Workshop during Tuesday and Wednesday of Leadership Conference week. Please see the “Pre-Conference Workshops” box on Page 15 for details.

Visit https://mnmsba.org/workshops-events/msba-leadership-conference for more information about the 2024 MSBA Leadership Conference.

If You Go


When: Thursday, January 11, and Friday, January 12, 2024

Where: Minneapolis Convention Center

Why: Attending the 2024 MSBA Leadership Conference is essential for school board members to gain valuable insights, innovative strategies, and networking opportunities that will empower them to make informed decisions, drive positive change, and enhance the quality of education in their districts.

Registration fee: There is no registration fee to attend the two-day Leadership Conference, but MSBA requests school district staff register board members, superintendents, and other district staff members in advance through the MSBA website. However, there are registration fees for pre-conference events (on Tuesday, January 9, and Wednesday, January 10) and for the Recognition Luncheon (Thursday, January 11).

Registration and hotel information: Please coordinate with your school district administration to register for the Leadership Conference, pre-conference events, the Recognition Luncheon, and hotel room reservations.
With artificial intelligence (AI) and coding being such prevailing topics in the K-12 world, MSBA is bringing in one of the country’s top computer science minds.

Hadi Partovi – a technology entrepreneur and CEO of the education nonprofit Code.org – will deliver his keynote address, “Computer Science and AI: Opportunity and Creativity,” during the Opening Session of the 2024 MSBA Leadership Conference on Thursday, January 11, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Born in Tehran, Iran, Partovi grew up during the Iran-Iraq war. His school did not offer computer science classes, so he taught himself to code at home on a Commodore 64. After immigrating to the United States, he spent his summers working as a software engineer to help pay his way through college.

Upon graduating from Harvard University with a master’s degree in computer science, Partovi pursued a career in technology starting at Microsoft where he rose into the executive ranks. He founded two startups: Tellme Networks (acquired by Microsoft) and iLike (acquired by NewsCorp). Partovi now invests and advises other technology startups.

In 2013, Partovi and his twin brother Ali launched the education nonprofit Code.org, which Partovi continues to lead full-time as CEO. Code.org has established computer science classes reaching 30% of U.S. students, created the most broadly used curriculum platform for K-12 computer science, and launched the global Hour of Code movement that has reached hundreds of millions of students spanning every country in the world.

In the following interview, Partovi discusses opportunities AI can provide education, the importance of computer science curriculum, and more.
PARTOVI: In the short term, the most immediate opportunity around AI is finding ways to reduce teacher workloads – using AI to do busy work or to make first drafts. For example, drafting lesson plans is an obvious one. IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) are something that special ed teachers spend a lot of time making, and there’s already companies that will automate the creation of IEPs based on access to student information systems and knowing some data about the student. They’ll personalize plans for students.

Reducing teachers’ busy work gives them more time in the classroom to do what they love: teach. Half of all teachers are already using AI in many ways. So, school boards really have more of an opportunity to train everybody to level the playing field among teachers.

The greatest challenge is that students are also using AI. In fact, surveys show that roughly half of all teenagers plan on using AI to do their homework this school year. And so, the challenge is, do we change the homework? Do we try to ban the AI use? Call it cheating? Or, do we change the goalposts of what we’re asking students to learn and to do? Therein lies the longer-term opportunity, which is to rethink the purpose of education. Not to mean that we shouldn’t teach basic reading or writing, but a lot of the rote memorization is less necessary because AI is going to be really good at it. In the same way that learning the multiplication tables for small numbers is useful, but learning to multiply large numbers is not something any adult does anymore because we now use calculators for that.

WE’re going to see AI go beyond grammar check and spell check to do more of our writing for us as well. That’s why I believe everybody should learn not just how to be a good writer, but how to be a good AI-enabled writer. And not just how to become a good coder or programmer, but how to be an AI-enabled creator. Teaching the next generation to be AI-enabled creators is probably our biggest opportunity. But the school system isn’t ready for that yet.

PARTOVI: I’m excited about personalized learning and the opportunity for students to get personal coaching depending on what they’re doing. Khan Academy recently released Khanmigo, which is an AI learning guide that doesn’t just give students an answer, but helps them find their way to the right answer.

We’re working on something similar that teaches coding, where you write your computer program and have an AI tutor that helps you figure that out – basically personalizing the coaching so that you don’t need a human expert to help teach you. An AI expert can help you learn from your mistakes. This is much more scalable because most people can’t afford a one-on-one tutor.

The other thing I’m really excited about is shifting education to be more about creativity. Too much of education historically has been around memorization or repetitiveness. We’re asking students to do repetitive row work, whereas the world around us is much more creative – and students are naturally creative. Kids love creating things on TikTok or Instagram or Snapchat because of their creativity. We have an opportunity to make school more creative and less about memorizing.
MSBA: You clearly saw a need for computer science course work to be part of K-12 curriculum and did something about it by creating an Hour of Code and Code.org. If a school district isn’t currently offering this curriculum, how can they get started? What are the basics a school district needs to get started?

PARTOVI: First of all, at Code.org, our vision isn’t that every school must teach Code.org, it’s that every school must teach computer science. And this is foundational for every student to learn: to learn how the world around them works, and to have a more creative educational experience to create with technology – and also to be prepared for the jobs of the future.

If your school doesn’t teach computer science or wants to expand its computer science offerings, there’s many options. Code.org is the highest-quality and the lowest-cost option. We offer free curriculum as a pathway all the way from kindergarten through advanced classes. And we offer teacher training, professional development programs, and for lower-income schools, we offer scholarships.

The professional development is completely free of cost for the teachers and we can train any existing teacher to become a computer science teacher. This is something most people don’t realize. It doesn’t even need to be a math teacher or a science teacher. A history teacher, an art teacher, a foreign language teacher – any of them can begin teaching computer science classes with the

Code.org curriculum. We will provide the training and support to make those teachers successful.

MSBA: What has surprised you the most or been the most gratifying experience as you launched and grew Code.org?

PARTOVI: I’ve had countless stories of students who’ve been moved by using Code.org – and the most moving stories have been students with learning disabilities of some sort. Many of these students have shined at coding and it’s changed their outlook on education.

But by far the biggest surprise to me has been the passion with which teachers have embraced the movement to make computer science part of the K-12 curriculum. When I started Code.org, everybody told me the school system never changes. You may as well give up before you start. And that may be true for other efforts to change education, but with our work, the teachers want this change.

Most teachers got into education as an act of service, and then they themselves feel stuck in a system that doesn’t evolve. And with Code.org, we’ve given them a pathway to evolve education into the future. The embrace and passion of teachers to create change in their own schools is by far the biggest surprise and inspiration of the work I’ve been doing.

Learn more about Hadi Partovi and Code.org at https://code.org.

Opening Session Keynote Presentation

Hadi Partovi, CEO of Code.org
“Computer Science and AI: Opportunity and Creativity”
9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Thursday, January 11
Minneapolis Convention Center – Main Auditorium

Synopsis: With the rapid advances in technology, it’s imperative for schools to embrace computer science and artificial intelligence — not only to modernize education and curriculum for the needs of the future, but also to make school more creative and engaging for students. Hadi Partovi, the founder and CEO of Code.org, will talk about the global movement to include AI and computer science in K-12 curriculum.

Biography: Born in Iran, Hadi Partovi grew up during the Iran-Iraq War. His school did not offer computer science classes, so he taught himself to code at home on a Commodore 64. After immigrating to the United States, he spent his summers working as a software engineer to help pay his way through college. Upon graduating from Harvard University with a master’s degree in computer science, Hadi pursued a career in technology starting at Microsoft where he rose into the executive ranks. In 2013, Partovi and his twin brother launched the education nonprofit Code.org, which Hadi continues to lead full-time as CEO. Code.org has established computer science classes reaching 30% of U.S. students, created the most broadly used curriculum platform for K-12 computer science, and launched the global Hour of Code movement that has reached hundreds of millions of students spanning every country in the world.
The 2024 MSBA Leadership Conference will close strong with a keynote speaker who bills his presentations as: “It’s Not Just a Message, It’s an Experience.”

Ben Rudrud – a nationally recognized, award-winning keynote speaker who travels the country speaking to students, educators, colleges, and business professionals – will deliver his keynote address, “Positive Relationships and the Power of One,” during the Closing Session of the 2024 MSBA Leadership Conference on Friday, January 12, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Rudrud plans to deliver a powerful and uplifting keynote message. He will share with members how to help make their schools even more amazing by creating a “RIPL” effect through positive relationships and ensuring all students have the “Power of One.” (RIPL stands for Relational, Impactful, Preventative, Leadership.)

Rudrud tells personal stories filled with practical advice and humor using an animated delivery. He captivates audiences with his messages and leaves people inspired and uplifted with hope.

In the following interview with MSBA, Rudrud touches on the power of positive relationships, the concept of the Power of One, and offers advice to school board members to support success for all students.
MSBA: How does your message about the power of positive relationships translate to the school board table in a time when school boards are increasingly having trouble working together?

RUDRUD: My message is going to be all about inspiring each other to know that we are on the very best team. I want school board members to know how valuable they are. I want them to know that they are looked up to in the community. And even when times are tough, there are people that do support them, that are there for them, that are rooting for them. I’m going to sprinkle that in my full message. I am also going to share what I call the Power of One with these board members.

Positive relationships make everything better, no matter if it’s a business, a school, anything. I have a way of delivering information in such a way that it challenges them. And they’re also going to be able to bring some nuggets of information back to their school district that they can utilize right away to make their schools more safe, absolutely more inviting, and something that everybody’s proud to be a part of – so that’s what I intend to do.

MSBA: How or why did you choose your message of positive relationships and the power of one?

RUDRUD: In fifth grade, I went to a speaker fair. I still remember that I have the newspaper clipping and years later, I look back on that and think, was that the start of it? And it might have been it.

I love sharing positive messages with people. I love making them laugh, I love captivating their hearts. And then the most important thing is sharing a message that they don’t just remember for the day or the week, but one that carries on with them for their lifetime.

It started for me years ago. I was 13-years-old when my 16-year-old brother was killed by a drunk driver.

And I had started speaking for different organizations like MADD and SADD, and then I spoke in schools and everything in my messages kept leading me up to just this dream of speaking more and more. So, in 2018, I created a message to prevent school violence called RIPL (Relational Impactful Preventative Leadership). The RIPL Message has really evolved into the need to put positive relationships first with everybody. We have to make sure students feel cared for, believed in, loved, and for them, they need to know that there are people in the building that are always there for them.
MSBA: Can you tell us more about the Power of One?

RUDRUD: The Power of One, what it means is that it only takes one person to absolutely change your day, your week, or even your life. I talk about the Power of One in schools and how important it is for everyone in education to understand it.

The Power of One is ensuring that every single student knows that they have at least one trusted, caring, positive, connected adult in the building that believes in them, loves them, cares for them, is always rooting for them, and is always there for them to help them understand that they can achieve things way beyond anything they could dream up.

And I believe that the key is making sure our students know that they have way more than just at least one. They have a building full of trusted, positive, connected, caring adults. For them to make that a reality, that's what I call the Power of One. Think of a person that believed in you. Think about that person right now in your head and imagine how they pushed you beyond your comfort zone, maybe at a time when you needed it. That person can be a source of inspiration. It is important to understand that you have that person and getting to a point where you never want to let that person down. That's the key.

MSBA: What advice do you have for school board leaders so they can focus on the work they need to get done to support success for all students?

RUDRUD: Stay the course. We have tough days in education, but we have far more better days. I'm going to talk about finishing the race, and that message applies to anything we do, but it's about knowing how important you are and how much you are believed in. Some days it doesn't feel like there are, but there are so many people on the same team. The team that always wins for the success of our students.

My message is going to be centered around putting each other first, putting positive relationships first - so, everybody knows that it's a school that values relationships above anything else, and it's a priority. Every single student, every faculty member, every community member must know how important they are, how valuable they are, and how much they all matter, and that we're all part of the same team.

MSBA: Thank you for your time. We look forward to your presentation in January.

RUDRUD: The MSBA Leadership Conference is one of the best conferences in the country. MSBA does an amazing job and I absolutely intend to do my part to elevate this thing to the heights of the moon. I'm excited to be there. I look forward to sharing my message with more school districts across Minnesota and the country. Please feel free to visit my website at https://benrudrud.com, Ben Rudrud on Facebook, and The RIPL Message on Facebook.

Closing Session Keynote Presentation

Ben Rudrud, Motivational Speaker
“Positive Relationships and the Power of One”
10:40 a.m. to 11:55 a.m. Friday, January 12
Minneapolis Convention Center – Main Auditorium

Synopsis: A powerful and uplifting keynote message to help make your school even more amazing than it already is by creating a “RIPL effect” through positive relationships and ensuring all students have the Power of One.

Biography: Ben Rudrud is a nationally recognized, award-winning keynote speaker who speaks to more than 100,000 students, educators, and business professionals each year. Ben's topics focus on the subjects of positive relationships, helping others, everyone's special purpose, believing in oneself, and understanding what it means to have a Power of One. Ben tells personal stories filled with practical advice and humor using an animated delivery. He captivates audiences with his messages and leaves people inspired and uplifted with hope.
My name is Mark Lanterman and I am happy to have the honor of presenting at the MSBA Leadership Conference this coming January. My Early Bird Session, “Cyber Threat Awareness and Creative Strategies for Managing Risk” will aim to instruct attendees about the particular cyber threats, and associated risks, faced by the education sector. I will also provide realistic advice for successfully implementing best practices and creating a strong cybersecurity posture.

Since 1998, I have been the Chief Technology Officer of Computer Forensic Services. Before entering the private sector, I was a member of the U.S. Secret Service Electronic Crimes Taskforce. For over 30 years, I have been an expert in cybersecurity and digital forensics and have testified in more than 2,000 cases involving digital evidence.

I am faculty for the Federal Judicial Center in Washington D.C., and the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada. I am also a professor in the cybersecurity program at the St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis. I have provided training in digital evidence, computer forensics, and cybersecurity to the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as numerous state and federal judicial conferences across the United States.

Throughout my career, I have come to understand the devastating consequences that can follow a data breach or cyberattack. While in many instances financial damages are the most pressing result, reputational and operational consequences can have long lasting effects. For academic institutions, the risks can be even greater when managing the data and personal information of students – and unfortunately, school districts and academic institutions are frequent targets of cybercrime. Huge amounts of data collected and stored, issues with implementing cyber best practices, legacy systems, a large attack surface, and a frequent lack of training in the “human element” of security can make for the perfect storm. A convenience over security mindset can hinder mitigation and improvements.

Evolving technologies can also present their own unique challenges, including the recent rise of artificial intelligence applications such as ChatGPT. While the benefits can be manifold, it is critical that academic institutions be aware of the potential risks and establish appropriate guidelines.

In my session, I will provide attendees with information regarding the impact of AI on educational settings and how to balance convenience with security.

Visit https://www.compforensics.com/mark-lanterman to learn more about Mark Lanterman and Computer Forensic Services.
Early Bird Session

Mark Lanterman, Chief Technology Officer of Computer Forensic Services
“Cyber Threat Awareness and Creative Strategies for Managing Risk”
7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, January 10, 2024
Minneapolis Convention Center

Presentation synopsis: Ransomware. Spear phishing. The “insider” threat. Organizations and firms face a myriad of cyber threats that come with ample amounts of risk. From reputational damage to financial losses, the possible costs of a cyberattack or data breach can be challenging to quantify — and mitigate. Mark Lanterman, Chief Technology Officer of Computer Forensic Services, will discuss latest trends in our cyber landscape including topics such as the Dark Web, doxxing, ransomware, and the role of the human element in making or breaking a strong security culture. Mark will also provide practical suggestions for improving cybersecurity postures with proactive and reactive strategies.

Biography: Mark Lanterman is the Chief Technology Officer of Computer Forensic Services. Before entering the private sector, Mark was a sworn member of the United States Secret Service Electronic Crimes Taskforce. Mark has over 30 years of security and forensic experience and has testified in over 2000 cases. Mark is faculty for the Federal Judicial Center in Washington, D.C., the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada, the University of Minnesota and Hamline University. Mark is also a professor in the cybersecurity program at the St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Learn to Lead: Join MSBA for a Pre-Conference Workshop

Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Learning to Lead — School Board Basics: Phase I Workshop
Date and locations: 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, January 9, at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis
Information: This workshop covers the role of the school board, the role of the superintendent, the leadership team relationship, and common scenarios facing new board members.
Registration fee: $125 for advanced registrants (walk-in registrants add $10)

Wednesday, January 10, 2024
Leadership Foundations — School Finance and Management: Phase II Workshop
Date and locations: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, January 10, at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis
Information: Presented by MSBA staff and state experts, this workshop covers core topics such as the budget, school finance, local levies, policies, significant laws affecting school boards, collective bargaining, and personnel issues.
Registration fee: $210 for advanced registrants (walk-in registrants add $20)

Building a High-Performance School Board Team: Phase III Workshop
Date and locations: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, January 10, at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis
Information: This workshop focuses on the stages of board development, characteristics of a high-performing school board team, navigating board dynamics, small-group interactions with school board video scenarios, and an overview of the MSBA School Board Self-Evaluation tool.
Registration fee: $210 for advanced registrants (walk-in registrants add $20)

Charter School Board Member Workshop
Date and locations: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, January 10, at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis
Information: Presented by MSBA staff, this workshop covers the three state-mandated areas for charter school board members: governance, employment, and finance. Charter school board members are required to complete this workshop within one year of election.
Registration fee: $210 for MSBA Charter Associates and $270 for non-MSBA Charter Associates (walk-in registrants add $20)
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Driving Change Through Diversity and Inclusion

YWCA Minneapolis’ “Inc.lude” consulting aims to empower organizations to build more inclusive, productive workplaces for all

By Luna Allen-Bakerian, Race Equity and Public Policy Strategist

YWCA Minneapolis is one of over 200 local associations under YWCA USA, all sharing the same mission of eliminating racism, empowering women and girls, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. YWCA Minneapolis works towards this mission by:

- Operating five early childhood education centers in the Twin Cities metro;
- Providing substantial out-of-school-time programming;
- Running a six-month cohort model workforce development program for teachers training to be early childhood educators;
- Offering health and wellness programming at our community hub on Lake Street; and
- Offering robust Racial Justice and Public Policy programming – conversations centering race and racial justice, advocacy for just and liberated futures, and strategic partnerships with organizations working for inclusive environments with racial equity at the center.

Read on about this partnership work, our Inc.lude consulting.

Inc.lude Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consulting

We believe that knowledge and awareness motivate us to develop skills which enable us to take action. So, whether you are navigating an increasingly diverse audience, developing diversity and inclusion initiatives, or addressing disparities in the community, we will work alongside you as you chart your course from awareness to action.
Our customized programming for organizations and individuals is based on our tenets of valuing dialogue, meeting folks wherever they are on their journey, creating an atmosphere of positive growth, and bringing people and organizations to action. We do this through assessment, custom solutions, and trainings.

YWCA Minneapolis helps organizations of all kinds — business, education, government, and nonprofit — transform performance through the power of inclusion.

Inclusivity is the bedrock of any successful workplace, and is a guiding principle that nurtures understanding, opportunity and harmony between employees. By appreciating the differences and commonalities of its people, your team can create a more productive, innovative, and positive work environment that drives better business results.

Inc.lude Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consulting empowers your organization to build more inclusive and productive workplaces for all your employees. Through diversity, equity, and inclusion training programs with an intersectional framework, we work with you to improve inclusive environments.

You can learn more about our work via the Our Voices blog at https://ywcampls.org/our-voices-blog/?fwp_categories=racial-justice.

Visit https://ywcampls.org/racial-justice/inc-lude-diversity-inclusion-consulting/include-diversity-inclusion-initial-consultation to sign up for a free initial Inc.lude consultation.

Luna Allen-Bakerian is the YWCA Minneapolis’ Race Equity and Public Policy Strategist. You may contact Luna at luna.ab@ywcampls.org.

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“Pick up any city newspaper and you will read it. Listen to any major talk radio station and you will hear it. Attend any school board meeting and you will live it: the telltale signs of a national tug-of-war over the selection of curriculum and the delivery of instruction. The key players are public school parents and educators. The key issues are who will control what is taught and how it is taught.”

Sound familiar?

While this quote no doubt resonates with your experience with the public schools circa 2023, you might be surprised to learn that this frustrating portrayal is from an article I wrote for the American School Board Journal in 2000. “What Do Parents Want?” goes on to frame the seminal challenge still facing our public schools today: “Can public schools and teachers retain an appropriate level of professional autonomy in a confrontational, in-your-face-world?”

My answer – 23 years after framing the question in “What Do Parents Want?” – is a resounding maybe!

Liberty, Bonds, and Battlefields

While “What Do Parents Want? lamented significant threats impacting public schools more than two decades ago, there is no doubt these same forces represent the landmines of today’s divisive school politics. Fueled by the power of social media, these barriers to success are more impactful and explosive than what I experienced as a public school superintendent in 2000. These challenges are also charged by the hot button power of a new vocabulary omnipresent in the media and on the Internet: CRT, perceived woke issues, and LGBTQIA+ to name three. While these issues are increasingly spurred to a gallop through their nexus with partisan politics at the national level, the battlefields have shifted to local school boardrooms.
This reality is represented in the references to liberty and bonds in the title of this article, foreshadowing two contemporary approaches public school critics have harnessed to galvanize their advocacy at the local level.

“Bonds for the Win” (bondsforthewin.com) represents one such organization that aligns with partisan politics at the national level, but focuses its advocacy locally. Bonds for the Win targets the surety bonds of their local public officials, required in some states for school board members or superintendents. The organization claims school officials have violated the law or their oaths of office and seek to hold the surety bond holders financially liable for their actions.

The impetus for Bonds for the Win was largely driven by families who opposed mask mandates during the pandemic, which the organization claimed was outside the power of school boards and therefore a violation of their oath of office. A quote from their website states, “It’s a daunting and overwhelming task to take on public officials in an attempt to open their eyes. But the fact is, they are BREAKING THE LAW with their actions and it is impacting YOUR CHILDREN!” The Bonds for the Win website also provides step-by-step guidance and tutorials on how to file a legal claim. One of the unfortunate realities for school officials is that when a surety bond action is filed properly – even when the veracity of the claim is likely without merit – meeting legal requirements to respond appropriately still requires an investment of time and money by the school district and its public officials.

A more recent example of public school critics organizing to challenge school board members and superintendents is manifested in the “Moms for Liberty” (momsforliberty.org) movement. A July 2, 2023, Associated Press headline, frames up one front of this battle: “Moms for Liberty’s focus on school races nationwide sets up political clash with teachers unions.” According to its website, “Moms for Liberty is dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government.” Similar to Bonds for the Win, opposition to mask mandates is highlighted on their website, although curriculum-based challenges (e.g., CRT, gender issues and perceived woke issues) are currently more central to their advocacy. Similar to Bonds for the Win, Moms for Liberty is fueled by partisan politics at the national level but channels the organization’s resources into local politics. The website states, “We activate liberty-minded leaders to serve in elected positions.”

Bonds for the Win and Moms for Liberty are just two examples of how parents and other stakeholders are organizing, raising money, and challenging local school boards, administrators, and staff. What they have in common is close alignment with partisan political agendas at the national level, but strategies and advocacy aimed at local governance – in this context school board elections. Both also gain significant momentum through effective use of the Internet and social media.

One consequence of these broad and entrenched controversies is increasingly contentious school board elections. According to Ballotpedia, the number of contested school board elections has increased nearly 24% from 2018 to 2022. There is also an increase in slates of school board members – linked by common politics or desired reforms – running in school board elections as a bloc hoping to gain immediate quorums to control school board policy decisions. A related consequence is heightened stress for school leaders and school boards. A 2023 RAND Corporation (rand.org) survey found that “... the intrusion of political issues and opinions” as the No. 1 job stressor for superintendents.

What to Do?

It is critical that school leaders find a pathway through this turbulence that balances the legitimate perspectives of families and community members with the need to effectively govern and respect the professional autonomy of those charged with delivering public education. Given the unprecedented and divisive challenges facing public schools today – and the likelihood that conditions will get worse before they get better – I offer two fundamental strategies designed to build that pathway in these turbulent times. Both strategies – a relentless and intense focus on core academic skills and a robust commitment to improved decision-making – are largely within the control of public schools.
In the opening paragraph, the “What Do Parents Want?” article referenced a core finding in a report published by Public Agenda (publicagenda.org) stressing that public schools must put first things first. In this context, the report asserts that the first things families want are safety, order, and mastery of basic skills. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) amplified this core challenge in 2023 stating, “U.S. students are struggling across the board. Educators, policymakers, and families need to work together urgently and decisively to address this generation’s learning needs.” Note the compelling language in NAEP’s charge: urgently and decisively. This crisis is reinforced in a July 2023 report by NWEA (www.nwea.org) stating, “... most students would now need, on average, an additional 4.5 months of mathematics instruction and 4.1 months of reading instruction to recover in these two subjects.” Both reports go on to suggest that significant academic decline – most concerning in reading and mathematics – was exasperated, but not born by the pandemic. Andrew Ho, a professor at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education, summed up these sobering data saying, “It’s a generation’s worth of progress lost.”

Faced with ongoing culture wars and challenges to professional autonomy, committing to putting first things first has important implications for school board policies, how money is spent, school board agendas, purpose and focus of advisory committees, content of school district websites and newsletters, collaboration with teachers, and what school leaders talk about in public meetings. Consistent with the Public Agenda, NAEP, and NWEA call to arms, it must be abundantly clear to everyone – including your harshest critics – that achieving high levels of academic achievement in basic skills (i.e., reading and mathematics) is Job 1 ... for every student ... every day ... in every classroom. And the actions of the school board and staff in this steadfast focus must align with their words. (Note: This commitment is not intended to imply that other academic subjects are unimportant.)

A second fundamental strategy focuses on doing a better job – no matter how well the school district believes it has done historically – to improve stakeholder engagement and ultimately the quality of the decisions made. This commitment to better decision-making – both in terms of process and outcome – complements the laser focus on reading and mathematics achievement, effectively adding another bulwark to a public school’s foundation for a better future. In order to effectively harness this strategy, school leaders need to think about decision-making as a research-based process rather than a series of unrelated actions.

One excellent model can be found in the book, Homerun Leadership, by Dr. Dave Webb (homerunleadership.com). His research-based framework outlines what Webb characterizes as the IROD (information, reactions, options, decision) process. “As a leader, moving your team from point A to point B can feel overwhelming,” Webb states. “The path of good leadership, sound decision-making, and real change is predictable – and attainable.” IROD prepares one to act on what research says about how people naturally make decisions. In Webb’s words, “You will implement the wisdom of all the major change-management systems.” While there are many models designed to improve decision-making, it is important to commit to an approach that is research-based and produces excellent results, and then use it consistently. Your internal audit in this context can be framed with a question: What decision-making model do you consistently use when engaging stakeholders and making important decisions affecting students, parents, staff, and other stakeholders?

**First Things First**

Public schools are experiencing unprecedented challenges. Divisive issues fueled by the convergence of partisan politics and ongoing challenges at the local school board level, challenge school leaders, school boards, teachers, families, and the broader community. Efforts to weather the storm and build a stronger foundation for the future can be enhanced with consistent focus on two strategies. First, understand what families fundamentally want: safety, order, and mastery of basic skills. Understanding this charge should take the form of an unwavering commitment to a system-wide focus to improve achievement in core academics – particularly reading and mathematics. Second, harness the power and consistently use a research-based decision-making model designed to improve the quality of engagement and decision-making over time. While these two strategies will not eliminate the deep-rooted contentiousness and resulting stress in our current political environment, they will enhance support from parents and other stakeholders and narrow the district’s exposure to attack. In combination, they will provide a firmer pathway to pursue its core mission of teaching and learning.

Don Lifto – a former superintendent for 25 years – is a former director with Baker Tilly Virchow and currently consults as School Election Strategies and in collaboration with the Morris and Leatherman Company in Minneapolis, providing school districts with referendum planning and survey research. Contact Don by email at donlifto@gmail.com or follow his X/Twitter handle, @LiftoDon.
In hindsight the signs were there all along – misidentifying letters in kindergarten, trying golf as a lefty and then playing hockey right-handed, and loving bedtime stories but having no interest in the words themselves. However, the journey to a diagnosis of dyslexia was long and hard. There were the parent/teacher conferences where we heard about below-average reading levels and increased practice of letters and spelling at home, but never any mention of screening for dyslexia – the No. 1 learning difference and reason children struggle with reading. Then came the encouragement of increased Title I services with a focus of improving his comprehension.

We knew comprehension wasn’t the core of the problem; Jonas’s mom is a high school English teacher and while not a reading teacher, knew just enough to keep asking and advocating. At this point, Jonas loved school and was a curious, smart, and social kid – we didn’t want him pulled from electives or recess to work on what wasn’t at the core of what was really going on. The problem though, was that we didn’t really know what was going on. It didn’t make sense – Jonas comes from a home with college-educated parents, he was read to often as a child, our home is filled with books, and our family as a whole values education.

As Jonas moved from primary elementary to the fourth grade, the challenges grew and the “trying to put a finger on the issue” grew fuzzier. Now the picture books were gone and naturally, academic homework was on the rise. Jonas struggled to keep up with the work his peers completed in class; we know now that’s a result of the aspects of dyslexia he struggles with – outputting his understanding in writing, slower processing, the need for hands-on learning, and trouble transferring information from textbook to worksheet. However, at the time, it looked like hours spent struggling through homework around the kitchen table, frustration (and sometimes tears) from both Jonas and us as parents, and a decreasing enjoyment of school and love of learning.

Something had to change, and as the availability of Title I services decreases in our district in upper-elementary and no other school-based interventions were available, we decided to look for answers outside of the school.

During the summer following fourth grade, we connected with High Hopes Academy in Ada, Minnesota. Jonas and Kelsey visited for a consultation and screening and within an hour we had the answer we had been chasing for years: dyslexia. Learning Jonas has dyslexia brought mixed emotions – relief of knowing what’s going on, an eagerness...
to learn more, and sadness in knowing some challenges will follow him throughout life.

Fortunately, a diagnosis also brought about a plan and within weeks Jonas began tutoring twice a week with an Orton-Gillingham trained tutor named Jan. Jonas would tell you today Jan is his favorite teacher because she has taught him to read, and in that, changed his life. As parents, we have first-hand witnessed both the improvement in overall literacy skills and the increased confidence that comes with being explicitly taught to read.

Since then, we dove headfirst into learning about dyslexia, which very quickly led to learning about the Science of Reading, listening to podcasts like Sold A Story and The Knowledge Matters Podcast, and asking even more questions about reading curriculum and instructional practices.

In hindsight, we wish we would have asked more questions about our district’s reading curriculum, challenged its whole language approach, and because we know teachers have all the best intentions, we would have advocated for the support and training they need professionally to be successful reading teachers. Ultimately, we feel fortunate to be able to provide the necessary private tutoring for Jonas, but we know so many others share our story and too many kids fail to learn to read proficiently, an obstacle that follows them through their high school academic experience and into adulthood.

We are happy to use our family’s experience to advocate for evidence-based reading instruction for all kids; Science of Reading is critical for students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, but it is best practice for all kids. And, while the work of providing evidence-based reading instruction is going to be done by teachers and staff in classrooms across the state, there needs to be conscious attention and resources given by school boards and administrators to champion that work to realize what the research supports – that 95% of children can be taught to read proficiently.

Thor Didrikson is a school board member for Roseau Public Schools. His wife, Kelsey, teaches English. To comment on the article, you can contact Thor at thor_didrikson@roseauschool.org.
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What motivates you at work?

Opportunity to learn new skills or take on new projects that will positively impact my department and business into the future.

What were the last books you read?

I am currently reading “Queen of Our Times: The Life of Elizabeth II” by Robert Hardman, and “The River We Remember” by William Kent Krueger.

What’s your favorite film of all time?

“A League of Their Own” and “Christmas Vacation.”

What song would you say best sums you up?

“(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life” by Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes.

What skill would you most like to learn?

Learn how to play guitar.

What makes you the proudest?

Seeing the fruits of my son’s labor pay off by being accepted into the Computer Science and Engineering School at the University of Minnesota and starting his freshman year in September. It showed that hard work does pay off.

What was one new experience you’ve tried that was completely unknown or uncomfortable to you at the time you tried it?


What is on your bucket list?

Writing a book, visiting the Northeast of the United States, and visiting more of Europe.

What’s on your bucket list?

What’s an essential part of your daily routine?

Morning coffee.

If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Any meal that my mom cooked. She was a great cook and baker!
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<td>Providing real-time information and response tools to assist in educating and helping students</td>
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<td>K-12 nutrition</td>
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<td>Outdoor sports lighting.</td>
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<td>Student Transportation CONTRACTOR</td>
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<td>specialty fire &amp; security doors and finish systems</td>
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<td>WB Manufacturing</td>
<td>Furniture and design room solutions for educational environments and fitness centers</td>
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<td>Wold Architects and Engineers</td>
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QUESTION: Our superintendent will be retiring at the end of the school year. When should we begin our search?

ANSWER: Ideally the planning process should begin before the end of the year, including setting the timeline for all search activities. The school board is the only hiring authority for the superintendent position, so it’s important for all members of the board to be present throughout the search process. Setting dates early helps ensure the availability of board members to attend those meetings. However, some potential candidates may not look for opportunities until after the first of the year, so keep that in mind when determining your posting and application schedule. Key activities when beginning a search include setting your timeline, determining stakeholder involvement, selecting hiring criteria, and creating a leadership profile.

QUESTION: We are considering hiring a search firm. How do we decide?

ANSWER: Ultimately the school board knows the needs of your district best. Some districts have the staff capacity and expertise to conduct their own superintendent search, while other districts rely on the expertise of an executive search firm. When considering hiring a firm, one of the best strategies is to reach out to school boards who have used search firms in the past. They will have firsthand information which could help inform your board’s decision. Also, ask the search firm about their vetting process and whether board members will have access to all the applications, how they will involve stakeholders, what fees will be charged, and their recommended timeline for all search activities.

QUESTION: Is the search done in all public meetings, including discussion of candidates?

ANSWER: Yes, all school board meetings throughout the search must be held in compliance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law (M.S. Chapter 13D), including the selection of candidates and interviewing finalists. While the search process must be conducted in open meetings, depending on the needs of your district, participation in those activities may be limited to the finalists and the school board. A special note about holding public meetings where private data is being discussed: Please take care to protect the identities of all applicants. Minnesota’s Data Practices Act specifies that only the names of those selected as finalists be made public (“finalist” is defined as someone selected to be interviewed by the school board), while names of those not selected remain private data. Applicants are free to disclose their candidacy at their own discretion, but the school board may only release the finalists’ names, veteran status, relevant test scores, rank on eligible list, job history, education and training, and work availability. All other information on finalists remains confidential, and again, the names of those not selected for an interview remain private data indefinitely.

MSBA acknowledges the varied experience with hiring practices among school board members and provides additional information to assist and support school boards throughout their superintendent search. MSBA also offers a “Hiring the Right Superintendent” workshop in addition to complete search services.

Amy Jordan is MSBA’s Executive Search Specialist. You can contact her at ajordan@mnmsba.org.
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### Architects/Engineers/Facility Planners

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<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Website</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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507-421-9331, Fax 507-280-9797
www.KnutsonConstruction.com
tjoseph@knutsonconstruction.com

Kraus-Anderson
John Huenink
501 S. 8th St.
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612-747-6258
www.krausanderson.com
john.huenink@krausanderson.com

COST ESTIMATING

ISG
Peterson
6465 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 970
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
952-426-0699
www.isginc.com
sue.peterson@isginc.com

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS/ SERVICES

The Minnesota Service Cooperatives
Jeremy Kovash
1001 East Mount Faith Ave.
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
218-739-3273, Fax 218-739-2459
www.tsc.org
jkovash@tsc.org

Situs
Ellen Anderson
705 Mainstreet, Suite 705
Hopkins, MN 55343
888-514-1971, Fax: 952-487-9389
www.sitelogiq.com
ellen.anderson@sitelogiq.com

Solid Rock Construction
Harlan Worsham
14665 Buchanan St. NE #4
Ham Lake, MN 55304
(763) 270-5058
www.srcmn.com
service@srcmn.com

Stahl Construction
Cathy Schmidt
861 E. Hennepin Avenue, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55414
952-767-2110, Fax: 952-931-9941
www.stahlconstruction.com
cschmidt@stahlconstruction.com

**ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS/AV SYSTEMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg Engineering, Inc.</td>
<td>(Richard Lucio) 1750 Commerce Court White Bear Lake, MN 55110 651-748-1100, Fax: 651-748-9370 <a href="http://www.hallbergengineering.com">www.hallbergengineering.com</a> <a href="mailto:info@hallbergengineering.com">info@hallbergengineering.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISG</td>
<td>(Sue Peterson) 6465 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 970 St. Louis Park, MN 55426 952-426-0699 <a href="http://www.isginc.com">www.isginc.com</a> <a href="mailto:sue.peterson@ISGInc.com">sue.peterson@ISGInc.com</a></td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Energy Solutions         | Ameresco, Inc. (Kent Wolf) 701 Xenia Ave South #240 Golden Valley, MN 55416 612-804-6274 www.ameresco.com kwolf@ameresco.com Apex Facility Solutions, LLC (Cody Capra) 3495 Northdale Blvd. NW, Suite 230 Coon Rapids, MN 55448 715-519-0781 www.apex-co.us CodyC@apex-co.us ICS (Pat Overom) 1331 Tyler St. NE Ste. 101 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413 763-354-2670, Fax: 763-780-2866 www.ics-builds.com pat.overom@ics-builds.com Nexus Solutions (Michael David) 6885 Sycamore Lane North, Ste. 200 Maple Grove, MN 55369 612-747-1003, Fax: 763-201-8410 www.nexusolutions.com m david@nexusolutions.com Kline-Johnson & Associates (Cory Meyer) 10400 Yellow Circle Drive Suite 300 Minnetonka, MN 55343 612-418-8882 www.kline-johnson.com cory@kline-johnson.com RM Cotton Company (Ryan Daugherty) 7145 Boone Avenue North, Suite 200B Brooklyn Park, MN 55428 763-999-0906 www.rmcotton.com rdaugherty@rmcotton.com

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS**

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**FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS**

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<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nexus Solutions</td>
<td>(Michael David) 6885 Sycamore Lane North Maple Grove, MN 55369 612-747-1003, Fax: 763-201-8410 <a href="http://www.nexusolutions.com">www.nexusolutions.com</a> m <a href="mailto:david@nexusolutions.com">david@nexusolutions.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Rock Construction</td>
<td>(Harlan Worsham) 14665 Buchanan St. NE #4 Ham Lake, MN 55304 (763) 270-5058 <a href="http://www.srcmn.com">www.srcmn.com</a> <a href="mailto:service@srcmn.com">service@srcmn.com</a></td>
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**FACILITIES MAINTENANCE & SUPPLIES**

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<tr>
<td>Kline-Johnson &amp; Associates</td>
<td>(Cory Meyer) 10400 Yellow Circle Drive Suite 300 Minnetonka, MN 55343 612-418-8882 <a href="http://www.kline-johnson.com">www.kline-johnson.com</a> <a href="mailto:cory@kline-johnson.com">cory@kline-johnson.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM Cotton Company</td>
<td>(Ryan Daugherty) 7145 Boone Avenue North, Suite 200B Brooklyn Park, MN 55428 763-999-0906 <a href="http://www.rmcotton.com">www.rmcotton.com</a> <a href="mailto:rdaugherty@rmcotton.com">rdaugherty@rmcotton.com</a></td>
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**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

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<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baird</td>
<td>(Michael Hoheisel) 7755 3rd Street North, Suite 400 St. Paul, MN 55128 651-365-2582 <a href="http://www.RWBaird.com/MNSchools">www.RWBaird.com/MNSchools</a> <a href="mailto:mhoheisel@rwbaird.com">mhoheisel@rwbaird.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehlers</td>
<td>(Shelby McQuay) 3060 Centre Pointe Dr. Roseville, MN 55113 651-697-8548, Fax: 651-697-8555 <a href="http://www.ehlers-inc.com">www.ehlers-inc.com</a> <a href="mailto:smcquay@ehlers-inc.com">smcquay@ehlers-inc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSBA-Sponsored CP-DBS, LLC</td>
<td>(Rick Killian) 40 Burton Hills Blvd., Ste. 415 Nashville, TN 37215 330-295-3140 <a href="http://www.payschools.com">www.payschools.com</a> <a href="mailto:rick.killian@payschools.com">rick.killian@payschools.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSBA-Sponsored MNTAAB (Minnesota Tax and Aid Anticipation Borrowing Program)</td>
<td>(Kelly Smith, Baker Tilly) 651-223-3099 <a href="http://www.bakerillty.com">www.bakerillty.com</a> <a href="mailto:kelly.smith@bakerillty.com">kelly.smith@bakerillty.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSBA-Sponsored P-Card (Procurement Card Program)</td>
<td>800-891-7910 or 314-878-5000 Fax 314-878-5333 <a href="http://www.pfmam.com/OurSolution/PaymentSolutionsProgram">www.pfmam.com/OurSolution/PaymentSolutionsProgram</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFM Asset Management, LLC - MSDLAF+</td>
<td>(Brian Johnson) 800 Nicotet Mall, 4th Floor Minneapolis, MN 55402 612-371-3720, Fax 612-338-7264 <a href="http://www.msdla.org">www.msdla.org</a> <a href="mailto:bjohnson@pfmam.com">bjohnson@pfmam.com</a></td>
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**FLOOR COVERINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiller Commercial Floors</td>
<td>(Dave Bahr) 2909 South Broadway Rochester, MN 55904 507-254-6858 or 888-724-1766 <a href="http://www.hillercarpet.com">www.hillercarpet.com</a> <a href="mailto:dbahr@hillercarpet.com">dbahr@hillercarpet.com</a></td>
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**FIRE & SECURITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arvig</td>
<td>150 Second St. SW Perham, MN 56573 888-992-7844 arvigbusiness.com <a href="mailto:answers@arvig.com">answers@arvig.com</a></td>
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**INACTIVE**

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<tr>
<td>ISG</td>
<td>(Sue Peterson) 6465 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 970 St. Louis Park, MN 55426 952-426-0699 <a href="http://www.isginc.com">www.isginc.com</a> <a href="mailto:sue.peterson@ISGInc.com">sue.peterson@ISGInc.com</a></td>
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**INSURANCE**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMC Insurance Companies</td>
<td>(Patrick Kelly) 11095 Viking Dr., Ste. 230 Eden Prairie, MN 55344 262-717-3603 <a href="http://www.emcins.com">www.emcins.com</a> <a href="mailto:patrick.m.kelly@emcins.com">patrick.m.kelly@emcins.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota School Boards Association Insurance Trust (MSBAIT)</td>
<td>(Tiffany Gustin) 1900 West Jefferson Ave. St. Peter, MN 56082-3015 800-324-4459, Fax 507-931-1515 <a href="http://www.mnmsba.org/MSBAIT">www.mnmsba.org/MSBAIT</a> <a href="mailto:tgustin@mnmsba.org">tgustin@mnmsba.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Insurance Services</td>
<td>(Rob Keller) 14852 Scenic Heights Road, Ste. 210 Eden Prairie, MN 55344 800-627-3660, Fax 262-814-1360 <a href="http://www.NISBenefits.com">www.NISBenefits.com</a> <a href="mailto:rkeller@NISBenefits.com">rkeller@NISBenefits.com</a></td>
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**LABOR RELATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy &amp; Graven, Chartered</td>
<td>(Maggie R. Wallner) Fifth Street Towers 150 South Fifth St., Ste. 700 Minneapolis, MN 55402 612-337-9300, Fax 612-337-9310 <a href="http://www.kennedy-graven.com">www.kennedy-graven.com</a> <a href="mailto:contactus@kennedy-graven.com">contactus@kennedy-graven.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NATURAL GRASS FIELDS</strong></td>
<td>Bolton &amp; Menk, Inc.</td>
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<td><strong>SECURITY/COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS</strong></td>
<td>Arvig</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOFTWARE SYSTEMS</strong></td>
<td>MSBA-Sponsored CP-DBS, LLC dba Payschools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRUCTURAL DESIGN/ENGINEERING</strong></td>
<td>ISG</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM MANAGER</strong></td>
<td>Donlar Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PUBLIC FINANCE</strong></td>
<td>Kennedy &amp; Graven, Chartered</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSPORTATION</strong></td>
<td>Hoglund Bus Company</td>
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<td><strong>I-State Truck Centers</strong></td>
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Artificial intelligence (AI) merits close attention from Minnesota’s school leaders.

In 1950, Alan Turing asked a simple question, “Can machines think?” and studied whether computers could mimic human intelligence. As IBM explained, “artificial intelligence leverages computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind.” AI is already part of daily life, from online virtual customer service agents and automated stock trading to speech recognition and more.

ChatGPT is the AI tool that occupies the focus of many educators and parents. A chatbot launched in November 2022, ChatGPT can write essays, solve science and math problems, and more (New York Times, “Don’t Ban ChatGPT in Schools. Teach With It,” January 12, 2023). One can sign up for ChatGPT and find more information on the OpenAI website https://chat.openai.com.

A quick aside: I asked ChatGPT to “write an artificial intelligence school policy.” In a matter of seconds, ChatGPT generated a policy that included an introduction, purpose, and sections addressing acceptable uses of AI in education, responsible AI development, accessibility and inclusion, the role of teachers, and more. The final paragraph reads, “This Artificial Intelligence School Policy has been developed to ensure responsible and ethical use of AI in our educational institution. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to uphold and adhere to the principles outlined in this policy, maintaining a balance between the advantages AI offers and the ethical, privacy, and security considerations associated with its use.”

This simple example demonstrates the benefits and the drawbacks that may arise.

AI and ChatGPT will increasingly be incorporated in classroom teaching and student learning. OpenAI points to several options, including creation of role-playing conversations between students and ChatGPT, development of exams and other tests, assistance in translation, and teaching students about critical thinking. Through careful use of AI, students can receive personalized tutoring and support when their teachers create individualized lesson plans.

At the same time, many have expressed concerns that student use of AI may result in plagiarism and
misinformation. The New York Times explained: “Cheating is the immediate, practical fear, along with the bot’s propensity to spit out wrong or misleading answers.” In response, schools in New York City, Seattle, and elsewhere blocked student access to ChatGPT on school devices. Some have expressed skepticism whether such bans are effective (those who are interested can ask ChatGPT how to bypass school bans on ChatGPT – several answers immediately pop up).

Some educators contend that, rather than devote substantial time and energy trying to block ChatGPT or keeping up with the latest AI detection programs, teachers should focus on ways to use this tool appropriately and restrict its use when needed. For example, in-class tests and classroom projects and discussion can limit students’ reliance on AI.

AI and ChatGPT are tools that will change and disrupt our understanding of education. School board members must commit to learning more about this technological advance and how educators can harness the benefits while minimizing the pitfalls. Policies and practices may need to be developed to both use and harness these tools. School boards will need to examine how AI can support students, how AI will require that students need skills to succeed in an AI world, and how to support teachers as they utilize AI.

One helpful guide in this work is Bringing AI to School: Tips for School Leaders, which can be found at https://www.aasa.org/resources/resource/bringing-ai-to-school-tips-for-school-leaders.

Terence Morrow is the MSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services. You may contact Terence at tmorrow@mnmsba.org.
The School Board and I have greatly appreciated their attention to detail and the professional ways they get things done. Our projects have come in under budget and on time. We have worked with two different construction managers and two or three different construction superintendents. We have found all of them to be highly qualified individuals.

Jeff Schwiebert, Superintendent (Retired), Sartell-St. Stephen ISD 748
PLAN
Let us help you get your project off the ground.

BUILD
Helping you build facilities for future generations.

OPERATE
Sustainable buildings aren’t a trend, they’re an expectation.