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St. Charles Community Schools

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IN SEPTEMBER, MASA HELD ITS ANNUAL Fall Conference in Traverse City. The conference was well attended, and the survey results indicated that the vast majority of participants had a very positive learning experience. On the first day, the keynote speaker was Dr. Tim Quinn, founder of the Michigan Leadership Institute.

Dr. Quinn has a long history of service to public education in Michigan and throughout the United States, and is a leader who has touched the lives of so many throughout his career. Dr. Quinn’s remarks at the conference were focused on leadership, and it was clear to me that whether someone is new to the superintendency or has served in the position for many years, his comments were relevant to everyone in the room. Here are some of the highlights from his keynote address:

“You can’t do this work alone; you need lots of people by your side.”

It is so very true that we cannot do this work alone! Collaboration and partnerships are critical to the successes of educational leadership. While it is often much more work to include others in our work, it has been proven time and time again that collective thinking is much stronger than the thinking of just one person.

“Be the best leader that you can be for your system, your kids, and everybody else in the system that depends on you.”

We all know that this is not easy work (far from it!) and that to be the “best leader” means a lot of late nights, early mornings, working harder and smarter, and a commitment to be lifelong learners ourselves. This is not an easy task, of course, but it is a responsibility that comes with the job, and it is the ethical responsibility of each one of us to be the absolute best we can be, every day, every week, every month, and every year.

“You have to love everything about this job. You have to love the kids, the parents, the teachers, your building administrators, and you have to love yourself.”

What I got out of this statement is that a passion for all things related to the job is critical. Can someone be a good leader without this type of passion? Perhaps. But to be a great leader – a leader that is fully committed to those whom he or she serves – and to be able to weather all of the challenges that we face day in and day out, a true “love” for the work is something that can take a leader from good to great.

“People are counting on you to be courageous. And you know who is counting on you most to be courageous? It’s your kids, every single one of those kids you adopted when you chose to take this job.”

This quote speaks for itself.

It was a pleasure to see so many of you at the conference. Let us all remember the leadership advice that Dr. Quinn provided as we move forward with continuous improvement for our districts and for our own leadership.

In closing, please know that MASA is here for you as you continue your leadership journey and please do not hesitate to contact us if there is ever anything we can do to provide you with the service, leadership, collaboration, and excellence that you need and deserve from your state association.
THE SCHOOL YEAR IS IN FULL SWING, and at this point superintendents are knee deep in their day-to-day work, as well as in leveraging systems to attain their district’s goals. Things never appear to slow down!

It is difficult in our line of work to shut off our brains. Admittedly, some of us wake in the wee hours of the morning and send ourselves e-mails with to-do lists for the next day. You may find yourself checking your e-mail, working on your laptop, blogging, tweeting, and texting even when you aren’t physically at work. In fact, you may feel as though you never really leave. Everyone seems to need you or need something you can provide. Many of us have experienced these moments—and deep down, we know it isn’t the healthiest way to live. Yet, we press on, feeling as though we need to use every available minute to do one more thing.

My first car, a mustard-colored 1976 Pontiac Ventura, served me well during my first teaching job, but I took it for granted. Fully absorbed in my career, I had other more important things to worry about than taking care of that car. Three years later, after I ignored the basic maintenance necessary to keep it going, the engine was shot and the tires were bald. My inattention cost me dearly. The timing could not have been worse, as I needed to take days off to remedy the situation.

Now older and, hopefully, wiser, I do a much better job with properly maintaining my vehicles.

Yet, in the midst of the kind of work we encounter as superintendents, it is easy sometimes to slip back into pesky old habits that do not serve us or others well. As we move into December, January, and February of this school year, remember to be intentional with your time, as well as with your workflow. Ensuring the best balance with work and rejuvenation will help to maintain your effectiveness both professionally and personally. Additionally, modeling a balanced lifestyle will hopefully send a message to those you supervise that balance is okay. Having a quality, healthy, balanced life is important for everyone.
SCHOOL CLIMATES IN DISTRICTS ACROSS THE STATE WERE TRANSFORMED IN recent years by so-called zero-tolerance policies that encouraged automatic punishments, such as expulsions, suspensions, and other out-of-class time for certain infractions.

However, experts now question whether zero-tolerance policies that push students out of the classroom are the best approach to solving discipline problems. Both current and ongoing research indicates that zero-tolerance policies such as suspensions not only deprive children of their fundamental right to education, but are also a top predictor of students dropping out of school and entering the criminal justice system. What’s more, these policies often disproportionately target minority students and those with disabilities.

New changes in Michigan law that took effect this school year require districts to consider a vastly different approach to discipline that brings all parties to the table to work through the issues surrounding an incident.

**Restorative justice in action**

Restorative justice policies are a way to achieve lasting change, shifting a school culture from punitive, zero-tolerance actions to a social discipline approach that builds a healthy community supporting positive relationships between students, staff, and parents.

The staff and administration of Eastpointe Community Schools (ECS) believe that restorative practices work and that they are worth the effort. ECS restorative practices focus on the underlying issues behind negative behavior and teach appropriate alternative behavior.

“I think it is important to remember that we have an opportunity, right now, to completely shift how everyone feels in our schools,” said Dr. Ryan McLeod, Superintendent of Eastpointe Community Schools.

For restorative justice to truly impact a district, it requires an ongoing investment and continual conversations.

“There is going to come a time, even a year or two into implementation of a restorative justice system, where

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**BRINGING EVERYONE TO THE TABLE**

How Restorative Justice Strengthens Schools and Communities

BY MITCH SMITH

Dr. Ryan McLeod, ECS superintendent, participates in building positive peer relations with students in a facilitated restorative circle.
the commitment will be tested,” Dr. McLeod said. “It can be overcome, and it is something that is worth continued investments simply because it changes the community. It changes how people feel about our schools. It changes how families, students, and teachers feel about the classroom, and about what is happening within our district. That is the ultimate payoff, that people are more, rather than less, invested in your school community.”

Roy Burton, Restorative Justice Coordinator at Eastpointe Community Schools, believes that restorative justice is an effective approach to build, maintain, manage, and repair relationships in schools.

“Restorative justice gets to the core issues such as what and why did an incident happen,” Burton said. “Then it works to get to the core issues, apply justice with fairness in mind, and ultimately give children the right to recover from their mistakes.”

Burton recalled an incident that perfectly illustrates the principles of restorative justice in practice. One of Eastpointe’s elementary schools was severely vandalized over the summer by a student and his younger siblings. Dr. McLeod felt this incident would offer an opportunity to put restorative justice to work to help overcome the district’s trauma.

“After having conversations with the impacted parties, sensing the boys in particular showed some remorse, the district saw grounds to move forward with a restorative circle (see above), where the affected parties could voice their concerns and their pain,” Burton said. The restorative circle was made up of the offenders, their family, the classroom teachers, the principal, and the school psychologist.

“Traditionally the students would not have been held accountable for their actions in this fashion. They would have just been punished, then expelled and never seen their teachers again, never asked to explain themselves. The teachers wouldn’t have had the opportunity to express to the offending students the hurt they felt because of the damage they caused,” Burton said.

According to Burton, the restorative circle was very moving: The student’s family spoke about how devastated they were by the incident; teachers spoke of the personal loss of resources that were purchased out of their own pockets for their classroom students; and the students themselves had the opportunity to confront the damage they did and look at how they could try to make it right.

“I truly believe that the restorative circle changed those students’ lives. They were not bad kids, but made a very bad error,” Burton said. “Moreover, we had an opportunity to restore the Eastpointe community. We had the family looking at Eastpointe as a partner, someone that was looking at them with empathy and working to help their child recover from a mistake while offering an opportunity for their child to recover.”

Discipline comes from the Latin word disciplina, which means “instruction given, teaching, learning, and knowledge.” The restorative justice model closely fits the old world meaning, allowing

**WHAT IS A RESTORATIVE CIRCLE?**

Restorative circles, sometimes called circle dialogues, take place with participants sitting or standing in a circle. They are a key element of bringing together persons that were harmed with the persons who harmed them. Included along with these persons, there also may be family and community members, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and any and all who were affected. Together, truly meaningful justice and change can take place by using dialogue that aims to build understanding, explore the incident’s impact on those involved, and work on an agreement for what needs to be done next to make things right. The ultimate outcome: meaningful justice for all.

**Four Steps in a Restorative Justice Conversation**

1. Understand the perception of the offender. Discuss with them what they perceived happened, giving them the opportunity to voice their perception of the incident.
2. Find out what they were thinking at the time. Do this while trying to understand their frame of mind, which helps put you in their shoes. The more that you can see through their lens, the better you will be able to help them.
3. Find out what they have thought about since the incident. Once the offender is no longer in fight or flight mode, they will start to calm down and begin to have a restorative dialogue and utilize reflective thinking. This gives them the opportunity to examine their actions in the present moment.
4. Ask them what they feel they need to do to make things right again. This puts the onus on them and makes them reflect on and articulate the fact that they caused harm, and what they can do to repair it.
for the fact that children are prone to making mistakes. When dealing with children, the discipline process should be viewed as another important teaching tool, one offering the opportunity to recover from and offer the skills necessary to learn from mistakes.

Dr. McLeod believes that the opportunity is happening right now, through utilizing restorative justice, to completely reshape how discipline affects the culture of their district.

“We’re trying to make it so that every student and every family feels that Eastpointe Community Schools is a good place to be,” said McLeod. Repairing a community, supporting resilience, emphasizing accountability, making a real difference in lives, supporting the whole child—these are just a few important reasons to consider restorative justice in the educational setting.

Mitch Smith is a communications specialist for MASA. Contact him at 517.327.9244 or mitchsmith@gomasa.org.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

MICHIGAN’S NEW LAWS REQUIRE THAT DISTRICTS consider using restorative practices in addition to or in place of suspension or expulsion. The new law defines restorative practices as “practices that emphasize repairing the harm to the victim and the school community caused by a pupil’s misconduct.” MCL 380.1310c(3)(b)

They may include:
• Victim-offender conferences
• Opportunity for the offender to accept responsibility and “repair the harm”

They may require the offender to:
• Apologize
• Participate in community service, restoration or
• Pay restitution

Learn more at the MDE Restorative Practices resources page:
www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-74638_72831_72833-361320--,00.html
BUILDING A STRONGER DISTRICT COMMUNITY THROUGH RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

BY MITCH SMITH

If the only tool that you have available in a toolbox happens to be a hammer, everything that needs fixing looks like a nail. This was often what school districts were faced with under zero tolerance guidelines (the hammer) surrounding school discipline procedures (the nail). It’s time to add new tools to that toolbox, ones that can offer alternatives to the blunt-force of a hammer when it comes to suspensions for students. Restorative practices are a new set of tools that can be used to help repair, adjust and build anew their district’s community health.

Restorative practices have become an important part of Michigan’s education conversation, especially when it involves local discipline policies and procedures. Recently, Michigan’s Zero Tolerance laws have undergone a series of revisions that have taken effect for the new school year, where district administrators must now consider using restorative practices as an alternate or an addition to suspension or expulsion of students.

Some districts have already embraced the principles of restorative practices and are broadly implementing and embedding them into their community’s culture.

Restorative practices have been transformative for Plymouth-Canton Community Schools (P-CCS), where they are using the principles to change the district’s culture from the school board to the classroom.

“Adopting restorative practices is a game changer in education,” said Monica Merritt, Superintendent of Plymouth-Canton Community Schools. “We know that relationships in education are everything, and restorative practices give a voice to all district students and staff, and in a proactive manner establishes a strong sense of culture, accountability, equity and access for all.”

P-CCS, even before the arrival of Merritt as superintendent, began the process of adopting restorative practices, and she believes that they are a major driving factor that is helping the district achieve its vision of excellence.

“We started with the Board of Education, looking at district policies,” Merritt said. “Those seven school board members looked at the restorative practices principles and said they wanted to learn more and be trained on how to implement them in the district. At that time, it was not
because they had to do it, but because it seemed like the right thing to do. When you are looking at the concepts of restorative practices—concepts that are right, fair, equitable and give a voice to all—there was immediate buy-in.”

Building a district culture around restorative practices

Contrary to what many people may think, restorative practices lead to proactive rather than reactive processes. According to Nick Brandon, Director of Communications at P-CCS, they set out to build a culture of collaboration, enthusiasm, and teamwork districtwide by looking at how they could incorporate these processes.

“We use restorative practices to set a positive tone and build our culture among the Superintendent’s Leadership Team districtwide,” Brandon said. “Every group in a school district can benefit from the process. It would be a mistake to think that this is only something that is good for students. While students are the focus of everything we do, there is no question that the restorative practices are a tremendous way to be proactive in improving an entire district’s culture.”

Bringing it to the students through the administrators

Research on Zero Tolerance policies indicate that they contribute to high rates of suspension, especially in minority populations within a school district. And if you want to see students leaving school altogether and not graduating, repeatedly suspend them.

“P-CCS was looking for ways to reduce suspension and expulsion rates that would look at each child and each incident as an individual situation,” said Kay Elaster, Director of School and Family Services with P-CCS. “Restorative practices looked like a very non-threatening way to build relationships with students, to look at each individual student and the unique set of circumstances of that student, and not placing them in a collective group. It was about meeting and understanding students where they are. It is truly a culturally proficient way to look at how to discipline.”

To begin the process, the district brought formal training to all district administrators through the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). The trainings led to skill development that built much-needed adult-student relationships in order for the district to better “know” the whole student.

“When you get to know students, you understand them better, empathize with where they are coming from,” Elaster said. “When students feel they have people they can partner with, it makes it easier to not have as many disciplinary issues.”

In fact, the first year after implementing new restorative practices, suspensions were down 11 percent districtwide.

Importantly, the new embedded restorative practices and policies address concerns that students may have and give them a clear voice to be heard when those concerns are brought forward. This leads to opportunities to more deliberately and effectively solve issues, mediate conflicts, and offer opportunities for students to correct behavior and move forward.

A new community culture

P-CCS has used restorative justice proactively to build a positive sense of community throughout the district. It is a way to turn the discipline process into a learning opportunity that builds strong and lasting relationships between students, school staff, families and members of the community. It has created a culture where the hammer spends much of its time in the toolbox, giving the many restorative practices tools a chance to work.

“It is just the way we do business across the board,” Merritt said. “When we love all 7,000 of our kids, isn’t that worth investing in?”

**ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES**

The International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) is dedicated to the study of restoring relationships, social discipline, emotional well-being, and civic participation through participatory learning and decision making.

With roots in restorative justice—a way of looking at criminal justice that emphasizes repairing the harm done to people and relationships—restorative practices have the broader goal of proactively developing community, managing conflict, building relationships and increasing social capital.

Visit the IIRP website to learn more: https://www.iirp.edu/

**DIGITAL FEATURE**

**WATCH SUPERINTENDENT**

Monica Merritt of Plymouth-Canton Community Schools share her story of restorative practices in action from the 2017 MASA Midwinter Conference Ed Talk. www.gomasa.org/Leader.
ALL IS IN THE AIR AND THE HOLIDAY season is quickly approaching, but MASA is already looking ahead to spring and planning the Women in Leadership Retreat on Mackinac Island.

The Women in Leadership Retreat is the signature event of the Women’s Leadership Network, which was created to support women in the superintendent’s office and other administrator posts. Through the Women’s Leadership Network, MASA offers targeted professional development programs and unique opportunities to network with other women in positions of leadership in public education.

“We heard from MASA members that they were interested in more effectively and intentionally supporting women superintendents,” said Dr. Tina Kerr, MASA Deputy Executive Director. “We thought about what that would look like and how we could create a program tailored to the needs of women leaders. The Women in Leadership Retreat was the end result, and it really resonated with those who attended last spring.”

The impact on attendees was immediate and invaluable. One attendee shared: “The Women’s Leadership Network provided an opportunity to focus on ways to

SAVE THE DATE
Women in Leadership Retreat
May 17-18, 2018
Mission Point Resort, Mackinac Island
www.gomasa.org/leadership-development/WLN/
be a more effective leader, which may often become overlooked in with day-to-day business. The full impact of the event was not realized until the next business day, when I started applying strategies from the event.”

**Save the date**

The Women in Leadership Retreat will be held May 17-18, 2018, at Mission Point on Mackinac Island.

The two days will feature a return appearance by Gilda Bonanno, last year’s speaker. This year, Bonanno will present “Leading and Managing Change.” Caryn Wells, author of “Mindfulness: How School Leaders Can Reduce Stress and Thrive on the Job,” will give the keynote on the second day of the retreat.

Another keynote speaker is in the works and will be announced when confirmed.

An added feature for the upcoming retreat will be breakout sessions led by MASA members and others. Those interested in presenting can submit a proposal using the RFP form on the Women’s Leadership Network page on

the MASA website, www.gomasa.org/leadership-development/WLN/. This page will continue to be updated with the latest happenings.

From start to finish, the Women in Leadership Retreat is an event for women who want to grow professionally, network with others in the field of education and beyond, and share their own expertise and insight with others. Registration will be opening in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing you on the island!

*Cathy Bacile Cunningham is the MASA communications and marketing director. Contact her at 517.327.9251 or ccunningham@gomasa.org.*
SUSTAIN EXCELLENCE AND NAVIGATE LEADERSHIP, BOTH PART OF MASA’S HORIZON Leadership Academies, have earned reputations as highly effective and relevant professional development programs. The rigorous curriculum has earned MASA the privilege of being authorized by the Michigan Department of Education to distribute an Administrator Certificate with a Central Office Endorsement to participants. Formerly, the only place a district leader could earn these credentials was through an MDE-approved college or university course—which can be both costly and time consuming for busy professionals.

MASA had something better in mind.

Professional development designed for school leaders needs to engage them in learning new knowledge and skills that can be transferred into their professional practice, growing them in their current and future roles. MASA’s Horizon Leadership Academies speak directly to a school leader’s current practice, offering paths to personal, professional and district growth. MASA is committed to grow and build great school leaders who will ultimately help determine the growth of students and strength of public education. Horizon strives to deliver a purposeful, personal, priority, passionate and professional program to participants.

Following are insights from recent members who have completed a Horizon program, speaking to the five Ps of professional development.

**Purposeful**
Horizon works with a leader’s strengths and challenge areas, raising critical questions that compel them to consider how knowledge of self can and should influence, shape, and impact their approaches and abilities to lead and support change in school districts.

“Navigate Leadership is a purpose-driven professional learning journey that forces you to get to know and reflect upon who you truly are as a person first,” said Dr. Corinne Edwards, director of learning, curriculum, instruction and assessment for Saginaw Township Community Schools.

**Personal**
Horizon is designed to be a great learning platform foremost, but also facilitates an opportunity to grow a personal network. Brian Keim, a relatively new superintendent at Laker Schools, found the Sustain Excellence program to be just that.

“It was a great learning and networking program, with valuable input from guest speakers as well as the other participants in my cohort,” Keim said. “I learned a lot about myself as an ‘influencer,’ and have deepened my resolve to lead in a positive and intentional manner, both at work and at home. I was also challenged by the concept of ‘destroying’ those things in my life that distract me from my real values and priorities, and am truly better equipped to lead.”

“Sustain Excellence created a space for practicing leaders to hone skills on personal reflection, grapple with personal values and beliefs, and create avenues for growth as a leader and learner,” said Dorothy Blackwell, superintendent of Vassar Public Schools.

**Priority**
An important purpose of the Horizon program was to continue a leader’s learning, and to work with other current superintendents while still maintaining an individualized district focus.

“This made the content relevant to our everyday lives both professionally and personally,” said Anthony Berthiaume, Ph.D.,
superintendent of New Lothrop Area Public Schools. “The program placed a priority on sharing different experiences so we could learn from one another and develop our own ideas as instructional leaders. The facilitators and cohort members showed a passion and professionalism for collaboration, which made it a comfortable environment for individuals to share and network, no matter how difficult our profession can be at times.”

**Passionate**

The passionate facilitators seek to provide and share their strong knowledge base, and enhance the program through the participant’s exposure by visiting on-the-job superintendents.

“I learned more during my ten sessions in the Horizon Leadership Academy than in any post-graduate work I ever completed at the university level,” said Brady Cook, superintendent of Michigan Center Schools.

“I was fortunate to have been offered my first superintendent job in August,” he said. “Thanks largely to the Horizon Leadership Academy, I felt prepared for the demands of the job.”

**Professional**

Horizon is a professional program developed by the people who want the best from school leaders.

“Sustain Excellence is simply the greatest professional learning I have experienced,” said Roger Bearup, superintendent of Grandville Public Schools. Bearup believes that having the ability to grow expertise together and connect what is learned to real world leadership practice is priceless.

Navigate Leadership allows leaders to network with peers from across the state. “Our learning together helped us to focus our attention on what we stand for as leaders, how to effectively communicate, and how to be emotionally intelligent with staff,” said Heather Kortlandt, director of instruction at Otsego Public Schools.

If you are a current superintendent, central office administrator, or are an aspiring superintendent that is considering a program to grow professionally with opportunities to earn an Administrator Certificate with a Central Office Endorsement or a Central Office Endorsement on your current Administrator Certificate, MASA encourages you to consider your colleagues’ experiences and choose a Horizon Leadership Academy for your future path to excellence in your practice.

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**SPARK GROWTH: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS**

Central office administrators are a critical part of a school district’s leadership team. Directors of curriculum development, special education, human resources, finance management, and other district leaders do their part every day to ensure that every student gets a top-notch education.

To help support the work of central office administrators and develop their leadership skills, MASA will be offering a new program through the Horizon Leadership Academies: Spark Growth.

Coming in early 2018, Spark Growth is tailor made for central office administrators who want to build their skills and become stronger central office leaders. It is a job-embedded, research-based program that allows participants to learn alongside peers from across Michigan, with topics including:

- Strategic Conversations for Educational Leaders
- Creating the Conditions for Highly Effective Team Functioning
- Practical Leadership Skills for Managing Change
- Facilitation Skills for Group Effectiveness

Learn more at www.gomasa.org/horizon.
LOCAL LEADERS FREQUENTLY ASK FOR ADVICE ON HOW TO UPDATE THEIR VIRTUAL learning policies to conform to state law. In an effort to help districts steer clear of potential conflicts between local policy and virtual course legislation and state guidelines, this article pinpoints some areas where existing policies may benefit from a refresh.

One possible area for review is to determine if current local policies restrict virtual learning to specific grade levels, for instance only permitting juniors and seniors to enroll in virtual options. While Section 21f of the State School Aid Act allows schools to deny virtual enrollment requests from students in grades K-5, it does not permit schools to deny enrollment requests simply because a student is in any of grades 6-12.

Some existing local policies include language that denies future enrollment in a virtual course if a student is unsuccessful in a prior virtual course. The School Aid Act allows for such denial, but two important caveats apply. First, the course denied must be in the same subject as the previously failed virtual course. Second, the failed virtual course must have been taken within the two most recent academic years.

Another area for review is to check if the policy permits virtual learning only under specific circumstances, such as when a course is not offered face-to-face, just for credit recovery, or only for Advanced Placement coursework. These forms of “special circumstances” are not allowable reasons for denial under the State School Aid Act, and the Act prohibits policies that include denial reasons other than those listed in the legislation.

Some schools have policies that charge parents for the cost of virtual learning courses. Policies that allow parents the option of paying the portion of the virtual course fee that exceeds the prorated amount of the minimum foundation allowance are perfectly allowable. So are policies that charge parents for virtual courses that are in addition to the student’s full course schedule. If neither of these two apply, however, and the virtual enrollment is...
part of the student’s schedule used for claiming the student in membership, the parent should not be charged.

Current virtual learning legislation and state guidelines do not provide exhaustive guidance in all areas. The 2017-18 school year may be a good time to consult with your district’s legal counsel for gray areas. Examples of gray areas may include items such as whether the student can be required to take the virtual course away from campus or whether a district must honor a parent request to allow a student to take the virtual course from home. Other gray areas could involve grading issues, such as whether an alternative grading scale can be used for virtual courses or whether virtual course grades can be treated differently for purposes of calculating a student’s GPA or class ranking.

Refreshing local virtual learning policies should reduce confusion and facilitate better communication between parents, students, and school personnel.

Joe Freidhoff is vice president of Michigan Virtual. He can be reached at 888.532.5806 or jfreidhoff@mivu.org.
IN SEPTEMBER 2017, THE MASB LAUNCHED Board of Education Governance Standards for the first time in Michigan. Developed by board members, for board members, through the Michigan Association of School Boards, the Standards provide a shared framework for effective school board governance for both whole boards, as well as individual board members, which are intended to help them serve more effectively on behalf of all students in the district.

Board members from around the state worked to build these guiding principles and standards to be reflective of research-based practices of effective school boards as a correlation has been found between the work of school boards and positive student achievement.\(^1\) Having standards in place will help boards to raise the bar, live up to expectations as elected officials, and better understand their roles.

You may wonder why these are necessary. Likely your board operates on these standards already or something close. Even if they don’t and could use the guidance, you may wonder how you encourage your board to adopt them. One simple answer is accountability. Michigan has rigorous standards for what we expect our students to know and be able to do; school boards also hold you, along with other administrators and teachers, to a high level of accountability. Our organization and others felt it was important for boards of education to model these high expectations by adopting standards, which have been endorsed by the State Board of Education, of their own.

Additionally, many high-profile figures have questioned whether or not school boards should continue to exist. A couple of years ago, Reed Hastings, Chief Executive Officer of Netflix, said elected school boards

BY DON WOTRUBA, CAE
weren’t “stable” and we needed a new model. MASB adamantly disagrees with Mr. Hastings’ assessment. When we look across our country at all of the elected boards, we actually see a successful governance model for moving school districts forward. The key is making sure we have the right people in place with the right intentions who are willing to take a critical look at how boards operate and determine what improvements can be made.

That’s the intent of the BOE Governance Standards. By design, they are presented in simple terms so they can be easily understood and promote understanding across the board table and throughout communities. The eight standards are followed by several questions the board can regularly ask and answer to ensure it is operating as effectively as possible, and that each individual board member is being disciplined in his/her governance behavior.

As the other key leader of the district’s governance team, your role as superintendent plays a part in the success of this framework. Two of the standards for whole boards are directly related to you. The first is to work in cooperation to establish and commit to a vision for the school district that emphasizes high expectations for achievement of all students and quality instruction. The second is that they will hold you accountable for creating the outcomes identified in the school district plan. These items create a focus for the board on the things that matter and guide them away from common distractions that often trip up a board.

School board members in Michigan are making a statement with these standards and, in essence, a promise to you and the rest of the community—we’re stepping up and demonstrating our commitment to govern effectively on behalf of our students. If they haven’t already, we hope you will encourage your board to adopt these voluntary standards.

More information can be found at www.miboardstandards.com or feel free to contact me any time.

Don Wotruba, CAE is the executive director of the Michigan Association of School Boards. He can be reached at 517.327.5900 or dwotruba@masb.org.
ALL CAN BE AN ENLIGHTENING TIME FOR EDUCATORS WHO WELCOME KIDS BACK TO school after summers spent outside of classrooms. For many educators, September has to be a month of remediation out of necessity as they work to bring up to speed those who spent their vacations away from books.

According to research, the implementation of a reading slide prevention program can drastically reduce intervention costs resulting from summer learning loss.

Summer reading programs work to reverse the effects of the summer reading slide and keep literacy levels rising in the out-of-school months. Leib and Barbara Lurie established Kids Read Now as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit in 2010 to eliminate the summer reading slide and reverse the effects of low literacy. Kids Read Now has provided more than 200,000 books free of charge to nearly 20,000 K-3 students in three states and is continuing to expand.

Kids Read Now is based on the work of Board Member Dr. Richard Allington. The program couples choices, challenges, and rewards with breakthrough communication technology to keep students engaged.
and reading through the summer.

“We tried dozens of changes and different approaches, and kept getting better,” said Founder Leib Lurie. “More and more of our kids raised their reading scores over the summer. There are no magic bullets, just many small, connected steps that have led to a turnkey, in-home summer program that engages parents, excites children, and works.”

By working with children in the vital K-3 years, summer reading programs set the foundation for a love of literacy that can carry into the future and keep children eager to read and learn as they continue through school and later in life.

Studies show that the end of third grade and beginning of fourth grade is a crucial time in a scholastic career. Children who are not proficient at reading by this point are four times more likely to drop out of school than their better-read peers.

Those who cannot read at an eighth-grade level have a more difficult time reading online resources sources (most written at a ninth-grade level) to find or apply for jobs.

Additional studies estimate that up to two-thirds of incarcerated individuals read at the lowest levels or are functionally illiterate. Recidivism is much higher for those who have not improved their reading compared with those who have. Seventy percent of poor readers will end up back in jail, as opposed to 16 percent who read well.

“Kids Read Now not only helps the schools and students in its program, it also helps the
communities in which it operates,” Barbaba Lurie said.

Literacy is a critical component in predicting the future success of students, she said. In August, Kids Read Now published a book compiled of essays from leading literacy experts that point to the immediacy of the issues stemming from illiteracy. Reading for Life: Why Childhood Literacy Matters is available via request for educators by visiting KidsReadNow.org.

Independent research has shown that the Kids Read Now program is driving success. According to the University of Dayton Business Research Group, Kids Read Now students saw “significant and substantial reading score gains, especially in high-poverty populations.”

From 2010 to 2017, Kids Read Now grew from a staff of two, serving 1,000 students per summer, to a dozen staff members, serving 14,000 students per summer. In 2018, the organization expects to deliver 300,000 books to 50,000 students across the country.

The program works closely with school systems to identify funding to offset the cost of the summer reading program. Many schools have been able to leverage a grant from the Greater Horizons Fund of Kansas City to reduce the cost.

Kids Read Now combines a comprehensive suite of choices, challenges and rewards to reach every student while actively engaging parents to assure students keep reading and learning over the summer.

Leib Lurie said that’s been the path that has shown the most success in keeping kids reading, and Kids Read Now will look to continue that model and work to reach more kids every year.

“Our goal during the next 10 years is to reach all eight million K-3 students in the United States who are not reading at grade level or are at risk of falling behind,” he said. 

Alison Marczuk is the chief operating officer for Kids Read Now. Contact her at 877.536.0130 or alison@KidsReadNow.org.

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THE MASA 2017 FALL CONFERENCE in September gave MASA members the chance to come together to network with peers from across the state and learn from each other, as well as our inspiring presenters. In total, 650 attendees made for an enriching three days in northern Michigan.

The conference kicked off with talented students from the TCAP Choral Aires performing songs from their upcoming production of “Les Misérables.” It was an energizing reminder that the work education leaders do every day is all for the kids they serve.

Keynote speaker Dr. Tim Quinn gave a passionate talk about the importance of leadership in today’s public schools, as well as the crucial role education plays in students’ lives. “Leadership and freedom are intertwined,” he said. “You can’t have one without the other, that’s been true from the time of Moses, Gandhi, Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and the list goes on. Our history is replete with great leaders who have fought for freedom and led the struggle to make sure that it happened, not
only for themselves but for their next generation.”

During the MASA ED Talks, six superintendents from across the state shared their insights and their passion for what drives them in the work they do. The topics were varied, with each one bringing forth a great deal of food for thought during the Table Talk interludes between presentations. Videos of the ED Talks video are available on the MASA Fall Conference webpage.

This year’s conference also included 34 Learning Sessions, the all-new Lunch & Learn sessions, informative panel discussions and lively Q&A sessions. It was a jam-
The Fall Conference featured more than 30 Learning Sessions, one of the most highly attended features of every MASA conference.

Presentations, videos, photos and more are available on the MASA Fall Conference webpage. Learn more at www.gomasa.org.

Packed three days with something for everyone.

The MASA Fall Conference would not have been a success without our members taking the time out of their busy schedules to invest in their own growth and learning.

We thank our members for their commitment to public education and for all they do for and with MASA. We also thank our sponsors for their support of the work we do on behalf of our members and public education in the state of Michigan.

Cathy Bacile Cunningham is the MASA communications and marketing director. Contact her at ccunningham@gomasa.org or 517.327.9251.

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Legislative Voice
Peter Spadafore provides an update on the Michigan Career Pathways Alliance, along with details of proposed legislation.

Nominate Your Best!
MASSP is accepting nominations for High School Principal of the Year, as well as other “bests” including Middle Level Principal of the Year, CTE Administrator of the Year, and Assistant Principal of the Year. Nominations are due soon!

5 Questions with Superintendent of the Year
Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift earned the distinction of being named MASA’s 2018 Michigan Superintendent of the Year. We asked her five questions to find out more about the work she loves doing for Ann Arbor Public Schools.

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