

# MASA Ethics Committee

## 2008 - 2009 Summary Report of Activities and Recommendations

### I. Formation of Committee Charter

Upon initial formation of the Ethics Committee resulting from the direction of the MASA President, Dr. David McGehee was asked to chair the committee. Dr. McGehee worked with MASA Executive Director Roger Kurtz to develop a Charter that would outline the work of this committee. This Charter form of committee development was modeled after the Lee's Summit R-7 School District's Continuous Improvement Process of formulating study teams for specific purposes. A draft charter was developed and then discussed by the members of the Ethics Committee. After two meetings that included review of suggested revisions, a final charter was agreed upon by the committee members. This Summary Report addresses status of the goal and charge of the committee. The Ethics Committee Charter can be found attached to this report.

### II. Membership

Membership of the Ethics Committee includes representation from each MASA Region. Original members of the committee included:

- Region 1, Northwest- Rob Leachman, Smithville
- Region 2, Greater KC- David McGehee, Lee's Summit (Chair)
- Region 3, West Central- David Lawrence, Lafayette Co C-1
- Region 4, Southwest- Tim Taylor, Hollister
- Region 5, South Central- Aaron Zalis, Rolla
- Region 6, Southeast- Kelly Burlison, Fredericktown
- Region 7, Greater STL- John Cary, St. Louis Co Special
- Region 8, Northeast- Roy Moss, North Callaway Co R-1

Due to changes in position that occurred from the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years, the following individuals replaced the original members of the committee in the respective regions as of July 1, 2009.

- Region 1, Northwest- Jeffrey Sumy, North Platte
- Region 8, Northeast- Fred Wiebling, Madison

### III. Goal

The goal of the Ethics Committee was to: Provide recommendations to the MASA Executive Committee related to school administrator ethics issues.

### IV. Charge to the Committee and Related Tasks

#### Committee Charge:

1. Review MASA Ethics statement
2. Discuss how to improve the image of the school administrators
3. Review and recommend policies and procedures to address travel, expense reimbursements, meeting attendance, handling of electronic communications, etc.
4. Discuss the issue of posting superintendent salary information

#### Related Tasks:

- a. Schedule meetings of committee to discuss issues (**Complete**)
- b. Seek input from colleagues on issues being studied by the committee (**Complete**, but no survey conducted at the direction of Executive Committee)
- c. Develop recommendations for MASA Executive Committee (**Complete**)

#### Charge 1, Review MASA Ethics statement.

The committee members met on three occasions, initially discussing the charge of the committee and reviewing not only the MASA Ethics statement, but also statements from similar organizations in other states. The statements reviewed included:

- AASA Statement of Ethics for Educational Leaders (Used by MASA)
- Alabama Educator Code of Ethics
- Texas Administrative Code
- MOASBO and ASBO Codes of Ethics
- Iowa Administrator Code of Ethics
- Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators Code of Ethics
- Dallas School District 2 Administrator Code of Ethics
- Illinois Association of School Administrators Code of Ethics
- Minnesota Board of Administrators Code of Ethics
- Washington Association of School Administrators Code of Ethics
- South Dakota Department of Education Code of Professional Ethics
- Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators
- New Mexico Code of Ethical Responsibility of the Education Profession

MASA has previously adopted the national standards for ethics outlined in the AASA's Statement of Ethics for Educational Leaders. It was deemed unnecessary to completely rewrite the national standard for use by administrators in the State of Missouri. Thus, revisions to the existing code were discussed. This Statement of Ethics, along with suggested revisions **in red** for use as the MASA Statement of Ethics, follows:

*An educational leader's professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for all educational leaders. The educational leader provides professional leadership across the district and also across the community. This responsibility requires the leader to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct while recognizing that his or her actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates, and students.*

*The educational leader acknowledges that he or she serves the schools and community by providing equal educational opportunities to each and every child. The work of the leader must emphasize accountability and results, increased student achievement, and high expectations for each and every student. To these ends, the educational leader subscribes to the following statement of standards. The educational leader:*

- 1. Makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making.*
- 2. Fulfills all professional duties with honesty and integrity and always acts in a trustworthy and responsible manner.*
- 3. Supports the principle of due process and protects the civil and human rights of all individuals.*
- 4. Implements **and complies with all** local, state, and national laws.*
- 5. Advises the school board and implements the board's policies and **all** administrative rules and regulations.*
- 6. Pursues appropriate measures to correct those laws, policies, and regulations that are not consistent with educational goals or that are not in the best interest of children.*
- 7. ~~Avoids using~~ **Never uses** his or her position for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic, or other influences.*

*8. Accepts academic degrees or professional certification only from accredited institutions.*

*9. Maintains the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development.*

*10. Honors all contracts until fulfillment, release, or dissolution mutually agreed upon by all parties.*

*11. Accepts responsibility and accountability for one's own actions and behaviors.*

*12. Commits to serving others above self.*

*13. Adheres to commonly accepted business practices aligned with audit standards and that are in compliance with all applicable statutes, rules, and regulations.*

With regard to Charge 1, it is the recommendation of the Ethics Committee that MASA consider the adoption of the AASA Statement of Ethics with the incorporated revisions. This list of standards should be referenced as the [MASA Code of Ethics for School Administrators](#). These standards should be promoted to membership and the public as frequently as necessary to ensure common awareness.

### Charge 2, Discuss how to improve the image of school administrators.

It is the belief of the Ethics Committee Members that the key to improving the image of school administrators, particularly superintendents, is through the effective daily implementation of our duties as the educational leader in our respective districts, communities, and the State of Missouri. Relationships are important to one's understanding of another individual's motives, behaviors, and decision making. Each administrator should be encouraged to make the building of relationships with key stakeholders a priority. These relationships should be fostered for the good of each student and not for the purpose of personal gain.

Focus should be given to the education of constituents on the realities of the superintendency. Efforts to ensure that there is a full understanding of the magnitude of duties and responsibilities of the superintendent should be considered. Many are not aware of the impact that a quality superintendent can have on student achievement. MASA should focus efforts on making the public aware of research-based findings related to the significance of the superintendent to ensuring a quality public school system. Strong leadership and stability in the superintendent's office is a proven formula for successful schools and communities.

With regard to Charge 2, it is recommended that MASA seek public opportunities to celebrate the positive impact that superintendents have on the success of their schools and communities. Further, consideration should be given to the formation of a committee directly charged with the development of a plan to address the specific issue of improving public perception of school administrators. The Ethics Committee believes that the image of school administrators will improve as a result of the adherence to a specific set of ethical standards such as those previously referenced in this report. Even the public promotion of the existence of such standards will have a positive impact on image.

Charge 3, Review and recommend policies and procedures to address travel, expense reimbursements, meeting attendance, handling of electronic communications, etc.

Members of the Ethics Committee discussed this topic extensively. This is an area in which discussion seemed to lead to more questions than answers. Each district seems to be working independently on dealing with issues such as cell phones, archiving of electronic communications, use of purchasing cards, provision of vehicles for travel v. allowances, etc.

The committee suggested that consideration be given to a survey of membership to determine what areas related to the charge were of highest priority across the state and to seek input into ideas on how to address any concerns and into the development of the Code of Ethics. This idea was discussed with the Executive Director and initial contact with a vendor for this purpose was made. Upon further discussion between the Executive Director and the Executive Committee, direction was given to the Ethics Committee indicating that it should not implement a survey for the purposes of meeting its charge.

In light of this direction, the Ethics Committee discussed the potential development of a Standard Business Operations Manual or a template for such a manual that could be shared with administrators across the state. Discussion involved the pursuit of a partnership with the Missouri Association of School Business Officials to complete this task. This effort could result in an actual sample manual to be used as a reference and/or adopted by local school districts. Or, a more general approach could be taken toward the development of a template that would provide guidance related to those items that should be addressed as individual districts develop such manuals for adoption and use locally.

With regard to Charge 3, it is recommended that MASA work with MOASBO in an effort to provide guidance to school administrators in the area of business-related policies and procedures. Strong consideration should be given to the development of either a Model Standard Business Operations Manual or a template that would assist districts in developing their own business operations manuals. Suggestions

for development and annual review of such models should also be included as part of this joint project.

#### Charge 4, Discuss the issue of posting superintendent salary information.

Members of the MASA Ethics Committee met on several occasions with the MASA Executive Director to discuss the issue of posting salaries. The focus was initially targeted at being proactive in posting of such information in anticipation of pressure and/or statutes that might require such postings. The discussion included the need to be open and honest with regard to compensation in light of what appears to be the perception of the public, and in particular some legislators, that we are in some way hiding something when it comes to salaries.

The committee members discussed the fact that this is information that is already available to the public upon request. Particularly in the metropolitan areas, it is typical for the media to request such information and at times publish it on an annual basis.

In light of the fact that the information is already available to the public and due to the absence of superintendent salaries as a major topic of discussion by the legislature during the working period of the committee, there was no sense of urgency among members to implement a procedure for posting of salaries. As the committee met for discussion of this topic, it appeared not to be surfacing in discussions across the state or in Jefferson City. It was the consensus of the committee members that this was not the right time to pursue salary postings.

With regard to Charge 4, it is recommended that there not be further study related to the posting of superintendent salaries at this time. If this should arise as a topic of discussion in the future, MASA should revisit this issue and consider a format to ensure consistency and accuracy in the posting of salary information.

## V. Summary

It is the conclusion of the members of the Ethics Committee that the charge as outlined is complete. Members of the committee stand ready to tackle any additional issues that the MASA President deems appropriate or to follow up on any tasks that the Executive Committee feels necessary. We strongly encourage the consideration of the four recommendations found within this report. In particular, MASA should pursue the adoption of the MASA Code of Ethics for School Administrators, the appointment of a committee to address the specific issue of improving public perception of the superintendency, and the development of a Model Standard Business Operations Model or template to guide such development at the local level.