

And the Survey Says...



By Doug Hayter, MASA Executive Director

MASA/MOSPPRA conference. While we'd like to see these numbers grow, the survey results from those who attend were very high. MASA strives to provide high quality professional development and our conferences are very much focused on helping members develop and improve their professional skills.

What topics are most vital to members?

While most members would agree that legislation is of tremendous importance to public education, when it comes to training sessions, there are three areas that rise to the top: legal assistance, school finance, and strategic planning. MASA places a priority on these matters as is evidenced in conference sessions, Focus On workshops, and school finance workshops offered each year. It's also worth sharing that two other topics continue to be on members' minds: student mental health and school board relations. MASA will continue to address these and other important issues in the future.

Who responded?

About half of those responding worked for districts with an enrollment of 1,000 students or less. Nearly 30% of respondents serve in districts with 1,001 to 3,000 students, and slightly more than 20% serve districts with 3,000 or more students. These demographics certainly reflect the school district enrollments in our state and give us an idea who is providing feedback to us.

What activities did you attend?

Nearly 75% of the survey participants regularly attend district meetings and more than 80% of those rate them as excellent or above average. This is good news. An important component of MASA is making sure members are engaged and developing a network of colleagues – our district meetings are an integral part of accomplishing that goal.

Approximately 40% of survey participants attended the MSBA/MASA Fall Conference and/or the Spring

Communications?

Members believe that one of the strengths of MASA is communications. The Legislative Bulletin, the MASA Spotlight and MASA E-News Updates scored 90% or better as being excellent or above average. Two areas that were well received but need improvement and increased participation are social media and the MASA app.

Representation & Advocacy?

Nearly 98% of the survey participants believe that MASA and the School Administrators Coalition (SAC) are doing a very good job at the Capital. As members know, the environment at the statehouse is more challenging now than ever – MASA staff and members must remain informed and diligent in working with lawmakers. Our ability to do so and to proactively promote and protect public education is more vital now than ever.

What are the major obstacles for MASA members?

It is no surprise that MASA members are concerned about state funding and implementation of state and federal requirements. MASA must continually work to assist members in these matters; but it is also noteworthy that members feel a need to prioritize educating under-served students and having more resources for student mental health services.

What grade does MASA receive?

Giving school districts and individual schools a letter grade is something many members struggle with, but when they look at their state association, it appears that MASA is "making the grade." Nearly 82% gave MASA an "A" and another 18% gave MASA a "B." We appreciate your confidence in the organization and we will continue to work hard to maintain your trust.

Continuing to provide quality services to our membership is at the forefront of our strategic plan. We appreciate your feedback on this survey and your participation in MASA. We will share more about planning for 2017-2018 and beyond in upcoming MASA Spotlight issues.

Have a great summer!

MASA Executive Committee

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2017 Legislative Session Comes to a Close



Mike Lodewegen Scott Kimble

As we all processed the election results on the evening of November 8th, it appeared it would be a bleak year for public education when the General Assembly convened in January. After all, Missouri would be looking at consolidated Republican control from the General Assembly to the Governor's office. For the past few years, a number of education related "reform" bills had passed both the House and Senate, but were ultimately vetoed by Governor Nixon and the votes were not there to override the Governor's veto. Regardless of your political leanings, this sort of "check" had resulted in a number of bad pieces of legislation never becoming law. Now only 82 votes would be needed in the House and 18 votes in the Senate for a bill to become law.

The beginning of the Legislative Session didn't do anything to quell our fears. It was clear following the

opening day speech of the Speaker of the House, the Governor's inaugural speech, and the Governor's State of the State address that education was going to be a topic of interest. Charter schools, vouchers, and virtual education were all going to be priorities in 2017.

However, none of those bills made it to the finish line when the final gavel fell on the 2017 Legislative Session. Typically, that outcome in and of itself would be considered a great session, especially considering the political circumstances. However, what set this session apart was that the General Assembly fully funded the formula and kept transportation funding level. This was a conscious choice by the General Assembly. The higher education community took severe cuts to their budgets and, until the

last day of session, nursing homes and in-home care providers were looking at significant reductions in their state funding.

What a difference a few months can make!

As we wrap up the 2017 session and begin thinking ahead to next year (and possibly a special session) we are asking ourselves: How did this happen?

What can we learn from this? How can we improve?

First, there are more public education supporters in the General Assembly than you might think. These individuals frequently get overshadowed by their leaders that push an agenda that all too often looks to be intended to destroy public education. However, whether it was to securing funding or stopping charter school expansion and vouchers, there were a number of legislators that worked tirelessly in support of our public schools throughout the session on behalf of public schools. Those legislators are to be commended for their efforts.

More importantly this year's outcome was a result of YOU. Throughout the session, it was remarkable to see the level of interest and activity at the local level. The General Assembly experienced a barrage of

...this year's outcome was a result of you, the MASA member, and others supportive of public education. Throughout the session, it was remarkable to see the level of interest and activity at the local level.

contacts from around the state on a number of issues but particularly on charter schools (HB 634) and vouchers (SB 313). These contacts came from administrators, teachers, board members, and community members that care about the future of public schools.

This year, it has become clear that administrators are becoming more familiar and comfortable with their role as the leading advocate for their communities when it comes to education debates occurring in Jefferson City.

As an association and as administrators, we need to continue to improve on our ability to engage in conversations, both with policymakers and patrons, about the impact that various pieces of well-intentioned, but ill-conceived legislation will have on our students, schools, and communities. Any uneasiness or unwillingness to press forward on outreach efforts will only seal the fate of public education in the state of Missouri.

Mike Lodewegen is the MASA Associate Executive Director for Government Affairs and Scott Kimble is the MCSA Director of Advocacy.

MASA President's Report

Living Our Motto: Lead - Develop - Support

Aaron Zalis, Superintendent of the Rolla School District



By the time this issue of the MASA Spotlight reaches members the 2016-2017 school year will be nearly over. This is a good time to reflect on the accomplishments of our schools and to look with a critical eye at what improvements need to be made. While reflecting on our schools, I recommend doing some personal reflection – where have you done very good work and where can you make improvements in the way you operate.

And what about our association? How is MASA doing? As you read in Doug Hayter's article about the membership survey, our members feel that the association is doing good and important work. I'm glad that so many of you shared your thoughts and we will use the survey results to help guide us as we gear up for the 2017-2018 school year.

Another area that we should assess is how well are we doing in meeting the expectations of the MASA Strategic Plan. I won't go into the specifics of the plan here, but I do want to focus on our Association's motto: **LEAD – DEVELOP - SUPPORT**

LEAD:

"Almost everyone wants schools to be better, but almost no one wants them to be different." I love this quote, but I'm not sure that it's entirely true. Yes, I do believe that people want their schools to be better, but I would argue that a lot of us do want to see school transformation. The key to better and different school systems is leadership. MASA exists

in large part to assist members in growing as leaders. Whether it be through the Mentoring Program, the New Superintendent's Academy, or special sessions developed by MASA, our goal is to help school leaders as they investigate and implement changes in their schools that will help students achieve and succeed.

DEVELOP:

"The mind is like a parachute... it works best when open." I never thought that I'd have the opportunity to reference Frank Zappa in a MASA publication, but this quote has always struck me. It is so easy to find a method that works for us and stick to it forever, even if another option that might be even better is placed before us. As school leaders, we must be open to new ideas that can help our students as they

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seek their personal visions and goals. MASA is at its best when it is providing members with opportunities to share and learn about new and innovative practices. We are surrounded by "experts" in the field of education (AKA, our peers and colleagues). We should tap into those knowledge sources and be open-minded to doing things differently to improve our schools (as well as our own personal practices).

SUPPORT:

The designer, Tim Gunn, said, *"Life is not a solo act. It's a huge collaboration, and we all need to assemble around us the people who care about us and support us in times of strife."* Perhaps our greatest strength as an association is the support we receive from MASA staff and the network of encouragement and insight our fellow members provide. The first two parts of the motto set the table

well for this last facet. MASA exists to help superintendents and other administrators become knowledgeable and capable leaders; furthermore, through MASA we gain multiple opportunities to develop as leaders. With support, we can be confident that we are making deliberate, thoughtful and strategic decisions that will serve our schools and students well. I don't know how many times I have reached out to my association colleagues to get their opinions and sage advice, and I have been rewarded with their trusted counsel.

I have used some quotes to help illustrate the MASA motto, so allow me to end with a fun one: *"A school year and life are like a roll of toilet paper, the closer you get to the end the faster it seems to go!"* I'm sure that all of us are ready to take a deep breath after another challenging school year – a year that seems to have flown by, but I encourage you to take some time to reflect on the work of your school district, your association and yourself.

It has been my pleasure to serve as the MASA president this year.

You will find the MASA Strategic on the website under "About." www.masaonline.org

Thank You!

MASA extends its sincere thanks to President Aaron Zalis and the 2016 - 2017 MASA Executive Committee for their outstanding leadership!