

# Minnevate!

## 2013 - 2014 activity report



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# Dear MASA members and friends

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) is an organization of visionary leaders. Our members include about 900 school superintendents, directors of special education, curriculum leaders, instructional technology leaders, other central office district administrators, service providers, retirees, and business partners. We are a large, statewide community whose mission is to establish the statewide agenda for children, serve as the preeminent voice for public education, and empower members through quality services and support.

An important focus for MASA is the evolution of the practice of educational leadership. We try, through the perspectives of our members and current thought leaders, to step back and examine “the big picture,” not only that of our schools, but of our communities, other organizations, and the world. We invite our members, other colleagues, and the wider community into conversation about children and their education and we ask how can we provide the very best education for our students, one that is relevant for their future success.

A year ago, we initiated an especially critical conversation that we named “Minnevate!” honoring our state and innovation in education. We envisioned a process where we would engage everyone who cared to participate in a conversation about our children’s future.

Throughout the 2013-14 school year, we invited all – our members, other educators, students, policymakers, the business community, higher education, the philanthropic community, and anyone else who cares about our students’ futures – to conversations intended to bridge the space between our visions for the future and the realities of today.

This document is a report of what has happened to date. It is based on data gathered at our nine Minnevate! events, as well as reflection on the process this year. It is not conclusive, but rather an account of the conversations of the past year. We have additional work to do in order to make specific recommendations as outcomes of the dialogue, and we will continue the process toward that goal. We believe this progress report will serve to inform our communities about Minnevate! and hopefully engage a wider audience in the conversation.

I want to thank the MASA Board of Directors for their support of this initiative. It takes great vision to commit to a project of unknown outcomes, no matter how valuable the process. We are grateful, too, to our thought leaders, John Moravec and Aaron Ruhland. Their knowledge, perspective, and facilitation skills have driven this process in a powerful and meaningful way. Great appreciation goes to our nine MASA Green Scholars, who provided invaluable reflection and to our international schol-



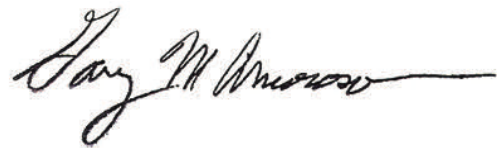
ars, who made this conversation truly global. You will see their names listed elsewhere in this document.

We are especially grateful to those who coordinated and participated in our Minnevate! events. Your voice is the essential core of this work. It is your vision that we will inevitably carry forward into action, and it is gratifying, because if there was one overarching message we heard from these conversations, it is how much our communities care about our kids and their futures.

It's challenging to prognosticate about what knowledge and skills kids will need in ten, twenty, or thirty years. We live in times of rapid, pervasive change — not just in the technology that affects every part of our lives but in the fabric of our communities, the expectations of public organizations, the impacts of economic shift, and the interaction of diverse communities locally and globally. Yet it is infeasible to not accept the challenge. Education is fundamental to a participative, democratic society, and it is our goal and our will to provide positive futures for our children.

As we go forward, I invite you to Minnevate! All are welcome; all are valued; everyone has a voice here. I hope you enjoy learning about our progress “so far” through this report, and I hope you take this conversation into your own circles, and bring back to us what you learn.

What could be more important?



Gary M. Amoroso, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, MASA







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# Executive summary

**Minnevate!** is a dialogue process to build an action agenda for Minnesota educational leadership.

This project aims to bridge the space between our visions for the future and realities of practice today. As a co-creative journey with Minnesota Association of School Administrators members and key stakeholders, the final product is an agenda for action that MASA and schools leaders can use to build positive futures for education in Minnesota.

75 participants joined as MASA launched the Minnevate! project on December 3, 2013 with an event that included World Café conversations surrounding the opportunities for Minnesota's schools in the future, engaging key stakeholders to develop collective capacity around a common agenda, and collaborative opportunities to create positive futures for Minnesota's youth. As the conversation continued, approximately 287 participants registered to join the Minnevate! regional meetings between March 5 and May 14, 2014.

Analysis of the Minnevate! qualitative responses employed an open coded, inductive strategy. The purpose of the analysis is to identify themes and patterns that inform the creation of an action agenda for MASA today as the organization heads toward the future. All data, contributed ideas, and findings from this project are available for all members of the community to access at <http://minnevate.mnasa.org>.

While the World Café questions were designed to identify tangible visions, directions, and strategic actions, we were surprised that deep, intangible, core issues emerged that present themselves as *strategic opportunities* for MASA:

1. **Lead the conversation** about creating positive education futures in Minnesota, identify the champions, and identify the sources of innovation in our communities.
2. Attend toward **creating a culture of trust** between and among schools and the communities they serve.
3. **Develop a sense of urgency** for building positive education futures as opposed to maintaining a passive culture of compliance-only actions.



While the Minnevale! project was designed to identify an action agenda for adoption by MASA, the leadership and cultural development aspects of this project's findings suggest that the organization can use the outputs of this project to help establish its longer-term strategic planning. More specifically, building upon the strategic opportunities presented above, MASA should adopt them as its agenda for action:

1. Lead the conversation and set a bold, measurable vision for education in Minnesota as the state faces new futures.
2. Continue Minnevale! conversations across the state, bringing communities and schools together in safe environments to build cultures of trust and cooperation.
3. Establish measurement standards that can be used to monitor the efficacy of MASA's Minnevale! programming.
4. Understanding that leadership for change requires a significant commitment and lasting, supportive presence, pledge at least six years of resources to support MASA's work related to the Minnevale! strategic opportunities.

The practical implication of this work is that it provides guidance for MASA in its strategic planning cycle that will begin in late 2014. The Minnevale! project provides critical insight into the contexts in which MASA and its members can work to build a collective capacity to realizing our bold visions for education in Minnesota.

# Introduction

We live in times of rapid, pervasive change – not just in the technology that affects every part of our lives, but in the fabric of our communities, the expectations of public organizations, the impacts of economic shift, and the interaction of diverse communities locally and globally. Minnevale! is a *process* to explore this space, not a pre-packed product of solutions. The project is designed as a grassroots chance for communities to come together and truly envision a future for our children, supported by our public schools.

## Minnesota's opportunity

Minnesota needs to innovate, and school administrators are under increasing pressure to reinvent education. Our “noble quest” is to facilitate learning opportunities and a dialogue process that yields an *action agenda* for Minnesota school administrators, legislative leaders, business leaders, and other key members of the communities we serve in an era dominated by accelerating change, globalization, and the emergence of a “knowmadic” society (Moravec, 2013). This project presents an opportunity to bring voice to those who play a key role in developing Minnesota's education futures.

First and foremost, we seek to break from our past practices and habits. Too often, we cre-

ate mere surveys of the learning landscape only to end there – as surveys. The Minnevale! project goes deeper: It is a co-creative journey that begins with a clean slate, and engages stakeholders in conversations focused on developing positive futures for education in Minnesota. While the Minnesota Association of School Administrators' members are at the center of the dialogue, key stakeholders from each of MASA's nine districts were invited to participate in the conversations during 2013 and 2014 – including students.

Key to the project is an integrative website at <http://minnevale.mnasa.org> that serves to share ideas and resources, and to continue our conversations beyond formal meetings in the project plan. The goal is to connect people and ideas together in a broader value network.

Throughout the project, project leaders collected data from meetings, and further ideas and artifacts were solicited from participants. Artifacts sought included student-produced videos that relate to the project, original artwork, and other multi- and transmedia elements that enhance our narratives about the future of education and our pathways to success.

The data and artifacts collected have been analyzed, shared online, and compiled into this report that not only summarizes our experi-



ences and ideas about the future of education in Minnesota, but also sets forth an agenda for action that MASA and its members can take before its members, state legislators, and other educational leaders in Minnesota.

To help “jumpstart” the conversation, we invited collaborators from the *Knowmad Society* project (see Moravec, 2013) to share their experiences. In the project, nine authors from three continents took a global look at the future of education, and shared their ideas and resources for building new education futures. The *International advisory panel* section, below, lists our active expert collaborators. This panel of experts was not asked to advise us on how to recreate educational paradigms elsewhere, but instead to provide a global view on how we can create a locally-relevant agenda.

MASA’s Strategic Plan charges us with “strengthen[ing] relationships with other Minnesota educational associations and policy makers to develop a common education agenda.” Throughout the Minnevate! project, in support of that goal, we invited our members and the wider community into this conversation, so that together we can connect our visions for the future with the realities of practice today. We benefitted from a rich leadership community and a structure that facilitates local, regional, statewide, and international communication and conversation.

## Project facilitators and researchers

**John Moravec, Ph.D.** (founder, Education Futures LLC), is a futurist, co-initiator of the Invisible Learning project, and the lead author of *Knowmad Society*. John’s research and action scholarship agenda are focused on exploring the convergence of globalization, innovation society, and accelerating change; and, building positive futures for human systems, which are approaching an increasingly complex and ambiguous era.

**Aaron Ruhland** (Director of Learning and Accountability, Orono Public Schools) is researching Minnesota’s perspectives on educational adequacy, work he is doing as part of his doctoral studies and for which he was awarded

MASA’s Richard Green Scholarship.

**Mia Urick** (Minnesota Association of School Administrators) has gleefully supported the professional development of school administrators for the past 23 years. She loves her job because she gets to work with her heroes every day. Her K-12 classroom experience is in kindergarten, the best place on Earth.

## International advisory panel

**Thieu Besselink, Ph.D.**, is the founder of The Learning Lab, a think-tank for social change. He is a learning innovator, researcher, philosopher, and social entrepreneur. He teaches social entrepreneurship, action research, system innovation, and leadership learning at Amsterdam University and Utrecht University.

**Cristóbal Cobo, Ph.D.**, is a researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford. He coordinates research on innovation, open educational practices and the future of the Internet (EU-FP7), and blogs at [cristobalcobo.net](http://cristobalcobo.net).

**Christel Hartkamp-Bakker, Ph.D.**, is co-founder of De Kampanje and Newschoo.nu democratic schools in the Netherlands. She has been actively involved in the European Democratic Education Community as a council-member, and developed her expertise on the wide variety of approaches that exist between democratic schools.

## Richard Green scholars

**Heidi Hahn**, 2014 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Director of Special Education, Paul Bunyan Education Cooperative

**Jay Haugen**, 2009 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Superintendent of the Farmington Area Public Schools

**Wayne Kazmierczak**, 2012 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Director of Finance and Operations, White Bear Lake Area Schools

**Mary Ann Nelson**, 2010 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Education Consultant

**Karen Orcutt**, 2008 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Superintendent of the Orono Public Schools.

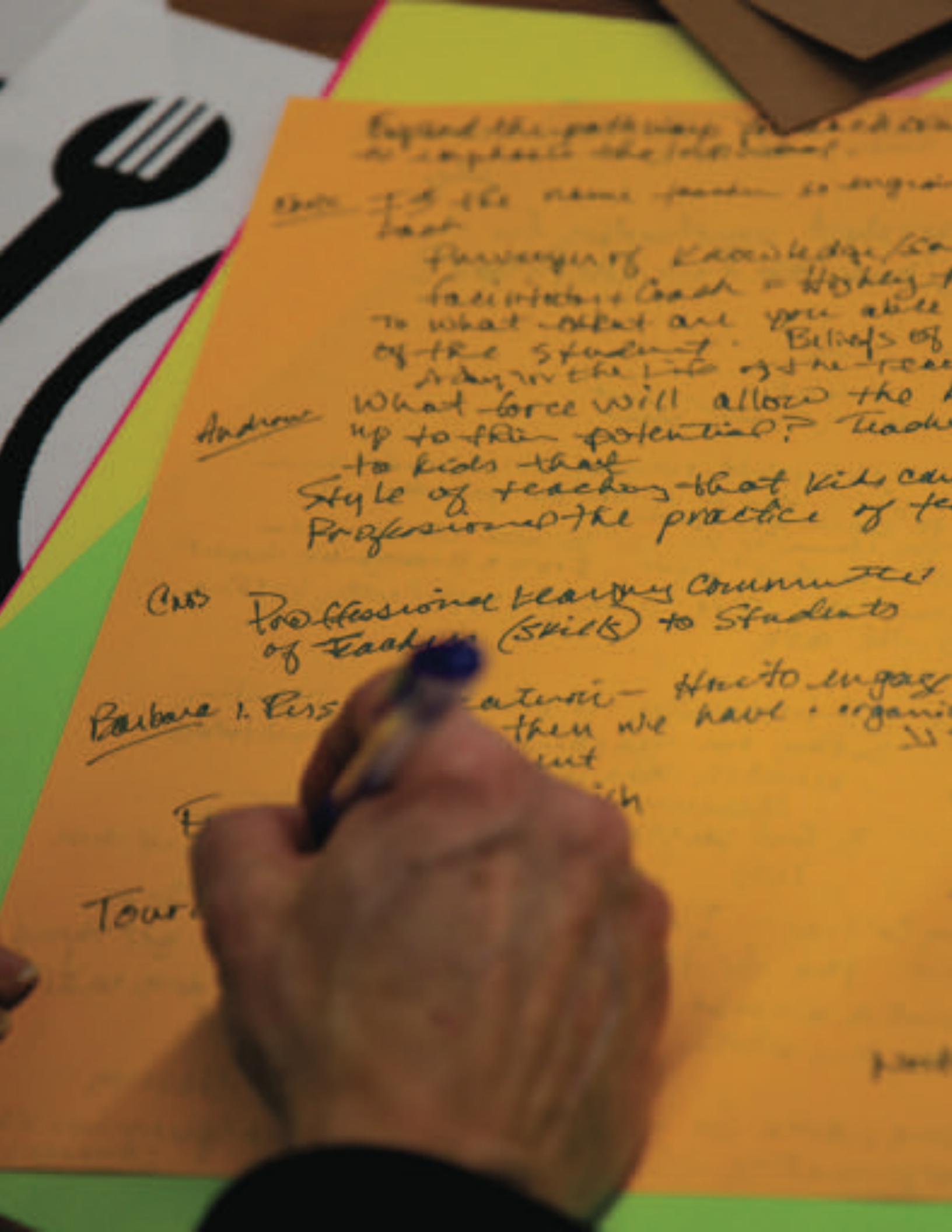
**Candace Raskin**, 2011 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Associate Professor/Administrative Licensing Coordinator, Minnesota State University at Edina

**Diane J. Rauschenfels**, 2006 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Associate Professor, University of Minnesota, Duluth

**Aaron Ruhland**, 2013 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Director of Learning and Accountability, Orono Public Schools

**Mark Wolak**, 2007 MASA Richard Green Scholar and Education Consultant





# The World Café method

The World Café is a structured conversational process in which groups of people discuss a topic at several tables, with individuals switching tables periodically and getting introduced to the previous discussion at their new table by a “table host.” A café-like ambience is created in order to facilitate conversation, and the process is built around seven design principles that focus on sharing, discover, and listening around questions that matter.

This method was selected as it is a simple format that is effective in both small and large group conversations (Slocum, 2005). Many Minnevate! participants had prior experience with the World Café method, and this helped to reduce training time for volunteer table hosts and note takers.

All participants were informed all data collected will be shared on the Minnevate! website at <http://minnevate.mnasa.org>. Participation in the events was completely voluntary, and, apart from a lunch provided by MASA, attendees were not compensated for their contributions.









# Launch event: December 3, 2013

75 participants joined as MASA launched the Minnevate! project on December 3, 2013 with an event that included conversations surrounding the opportunities for Minnesota's schools in the future, engaging key stakeholders to develop collective capacity around a common agenda and collaborative opportunities to create positive futures for Minnesota's youth. Presenters included Minnesota Commissioner of Education Brenda Cassellius, Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, MASA Richard Green Scholar Aaron Ruhland, and Education Futures founder John Moravec.

Constituents from many stakeholder groups engaged in rich conversation, discussions focused on how we can come together and truly work as a state on behalf of every child, focusing on what we all can agree upon and not what we do not agree upon.

## Facilitators

We are grateful to the 11 students, faculty, and staff of the Art of Hosting Community of Practice at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, for acting as table hosts for the launch conversation and providing the conversation. Full reports from the facilitators are available at <http://minnevate.mnasa.org/inside/ideas/>.

## Questions

The Minnevate! project launch focused on three questions, which were discussed during one World Café round for each:

1. What are the greatest opportunities for Minnesota's schools as we face the future?
2. Who are the key stakeholders and leaders that help drive Minnesota's future? How can we develop collective capacity around a common agenda?
3. Looking forward, how can we best collaborate and create positive futures for Minnesota's schools and youth?

## Conversation summary

This narrative presents a digest of conversations at the Minnevate! launch event.

***Question 1: What are the greatest opportunities for Minnesota's schools as we face the future?***

Conversations focused on the need to embrace technologies; share best practices and research; partner with our communities; reconsider the foundations of education; transcend



classroom boundaries; recognize diversity as an asset; treat students as assets; rethink teacher engagement; and, align education funding to our common priorities.

Technologies can move us from a time-based, credit-based, “being in seats” approach to learning toward finding other ways to learn. We can super-charge our sharing processes, by using technologies to share curricula, drive decisions through data, share human resources, etc. We can collaborate with the “big data” industry (data mining and analytics), and develop opportunities to work with community members, for-profits, nonprofits, and post secondary institutions in order to cultivate and create the best learning experiences possible for students in the state.

We need to reconsider the foundations of our approaches to education. We need to think about “what is learning,” consider the whole child, create opportunities for experiential learning, and shine an honest light on legacy structures – including measurement.

We have opportunities to transcend classroom boundaries, co-create goals with our communities, establish regional centers of excellence, engage parents, and invite the full community to be more engaged with the student “workforce.” We can embrace the excellent work ethic that has arrived with every wave of immigrants to Minnesota, and recognize that the level of diversity is changing at a rapid pace. One participant observed, “right now, 96.5% of our teachers are white, and we have an opportunity to recruit a more diverse pool.”

Students are assets – they are often far more advanced than adults. We need to change the relationship between teacher and student to one where educators serve in the roles of navigator, coach, and learning leader. We can understand and apply basic human motivation science, and we can focus on individual outcomes and individual education plans.

We have an opportunity to align education funding to our common priorities. Recent elections demonstrate our communities support our schools. We can de-politicize public education and break down the old accountability structures that create lists of winners

and losers, and create win/win opportunities and value that matters.

**Question 2: Who are the key stakeholders and leaders that help drive Minnesota’s future? How can we develop collective capacity around a common agenda?**

Our stakeholders include business leaders; our competitors; community members; educators; families (especially parents); government; and, students. We need to clarify what a “common agenda” means, who sets it, and who establishes it.

Business leaders include chambers of commerce, but we need other voices (both big and small) at the table. We need entrepreneurs – including those from elsewhere around the world that are creating change – and they need not be connected with education. We can learn from examples in Singapore where local businesses work with schools using technologies for learning, and from a mentor program in Mankato, which enabled classroom walls to disappear.

Schools compete against each other – we compete to be the “best” via testing as well in competition to attract students and money. We need to rethink this.

We need to bring more diverse community representation into the conversation. We can democratize diversity by inviting engagement and input, and recognize that all members of our community are becoming educators, not just certain people who “do it.”

Teachers need to be passionate, learn to embrace different teaching methods, and allow mentorship. They need to personalize learning and make sure students can have fun learning, too. And, they should be aware about *how* we create standards, not *just* what they are. Teacher preparation is not connected enough to pathways for the professional development of principals. We need to make sure teachers and principals share more through professional learning.

We need to build connections with communities and universities to learn more about which skills are needed, and enable cooperatives and



consortiums of districts to come together to share ideas and infrastructures. Through collaboration, we can create a great impact.

Parents need to take an active role in their students’ education, and we particularly need to engage minority students and families. We need to remove time and credit barriers, and implement changes that allow for less focus on tests, and more on achievement.

Government partners include the Minnesota Department of Employment and Educational Development, legislative partners, and the federal government. In 2013, the Youth Voice bill became law in the State of Minnesota, and students will “force” change away from highly regulated systems that stand in the way of innovation. Having students from other countries is an important component for U.S. students to understand the world economy and other cultures.

The sense of urgency to fully engage stakeholders may not exist to invite the type of collaboration necessary for building collective capacity. We are often dominated by politics – agendas last until the next election is won. We need a common agenda that is based on research and is credible, and we can learn from stakeholders outside of Minnesota with alternative models for education. We should find out what is working, and what is not. We have to work beyond our comfort zones, and consider that as we work we may be protecting the status quo, which would ultimately be harmful. How can the State of Minnesota create a practical platform where all stakeholders can have input?

**Question 3: Looking forward, how can we best collaborate and create positive futures for Minnesota’s schools and youth?**

Our discussions focused on the need to share; transcend self-interest; utilize technologies





smartly; rethink our approaches to “education”; define what a positive future for Minnesota’s youth looks like; and, broaden our thinking about teaching and learning.

There was a recognition that self-interest is always at play when we approach any change in Minnesota’s schools. We have to be willing to have an open and honest discussion about what those changes mean to each of us personally and professionally. Most people learn about education issues during elections, and education is presented as a wedge issue that prevents us from taking a long view or creating a shared vision. As we move forward, we need to communicate with each other, and share our assumptions and mutual values to create a common vision and definition of a “positive future” for Minnesota’s youth. One pathway would be to create a research center to understand and communicate best practices that work and help us navigate between myths and facts (i.e., with Common Core Standards).

We can start smaller, create common agenda community report cards, and not put down the efforts of others.

One way to build capacity is to provide new technological tools that can be incorporated with instructional design in order to personalize learning for students. While we focus on the use of technologies in schools, we should also look at home: How can we help parents understand the benefits of investing into technologies and using them effectively?

We need to rethink our approaches and attitudes toward education where we move away from the “deficit model,” and instead concentrate on creating a value-added perspective. What constitutes a “teacher” may be re-envisioned from the total expert model toward an engager with students as a part of learning, tying creativity with the realization of unmet needs. Schools need to understand that it is “okay” to take risks, and that it is neces-

sary because we cannot continue our practices from the previous century. We need to give ourselves permission to act, and seek flexibility to address different needs across the state (i.e., rural vs. urban). We need to be both tight and loose with requirements – one size does not fit all.

The phrase “positive future for all Minnesota youth” needs to be defined at a broad community level: Do we have an “inventory” of common goals? Can we agree on who a learner is? What is learning? What is a “positive” future? And, who is the collective “we?”

We should eliminate the four “boxes” of education (pre-k, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary), and have a more inclusive conversation about setting a common agenda where we ensure all stakeholders are represented. Equitable opportunities should drive our standards. Education used to be recognized, with family and church, as part of a three-legged stool in our communities. We should revitalize that. We need to develop partnerships with seniors and students (connect students with the wisdom of elders), with businesses and students, and with communities and students.

With the help of VoiceHive’s Jeff Brown, we took a snapshot of the group’s “Minnevator Mood” – one word that describes education today, expressed in a cloud of weighted responses:

## Discussion

A frequent point that emerged is that there is a leadership gap. *We do not have a common agenda for education, and no person or organization is leading to create such a vision and working to actualize it.* For MASA, this presents a strategic opportunity that can be developed through the Minnevate! project.

Participants expressed a concern that we are disconnected from each other as individual professionals and as organizations. As we set a common agenda, we need to keep in mind the desire for people to collaborate, share, and learn from others.

Perhaps most surprisingly, a theme emerged that calls on us to question or rethink our assumptions about education, students, and teachers. With the group present at the Minnevate! launch, the “business as usual” mentality was not evident. Rather, voices emerged that said it is “okay” to take risks and try new approaches – and to share what we have

## Our “Minnevator Mood”





learned with others.

Whereas, as a society, we often “educationalize” our problems – that is, we blame education for many things that have gone wrong – our conversation was received as being generally positive. Facilitator Tobias “Toby” Spanier wrote of his table’s experience:

Participants thought it was a pleasant surprise to be talking about opportunities rather than challenges, since they indicated that this is the normal operating procedure. There was a recognition that self-interest is always at play when we approach any change in Minnesota schools. We have to be willing to have an open and honest discussion about what those changes mean to each of us personally and professionally.

But, during conversations around the third question, many attitudes shifted toward negativity and skepticism: *Can we transcend self-interest and create a collective capacity for building positive futures for Minnesota’s youth?*

As we planned for conversations with future Minnevate! groups, we took the experiences learned during this meeting and zeroed in on the third question: *Looking forward, how can we best collaborate and create positive futures for Minnesota’s schools and youth?* This was used to drive the planning for regional meetings that began in the spring of 2014.



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**Mia Urick**  
*Minnevate! co-facilitator*









# Regional meetings: Spring 2014

Approximately 287 participants registered to join the Minnevate! regional meetings between March 5 and May 14, 2014. John Moravec and Aaron Ruhland provided thought leadership through opening presentations. MASA Region 8 further enriched their meeting by providing an opening presentation by David Pace, Superintendent of East Grand Forks Public School District. Presentations from Jonathan Zierdt, President and CEO, Greater Mankato Growth, and Bukata Hayes, Executive Director, Greater Mankato Diversity Council, deepened the conversation in MASA Region 2.

Minnevate! meetings were held at each of MASA's nine regions, except for MASA Region 7, in which no meeting has been held to date. An additional, "mini-Minnevate!" session was held as part of the Minnesota Administrators for Special Education Best Practices Conference in Brainerd, Minnesota on May 9, 2014. MASE findings are summarized separately as the Minnevate! question considered by the group was customized to be more relevant for their conversation. The Minnevate! website contains an archive of all data collected at <http://minnevate.mnasa.org/inside/ideas>.

Responses from each meeting group were collected to answer three questions:

1. What is our boldest vision for positive education futures in Minnesota?

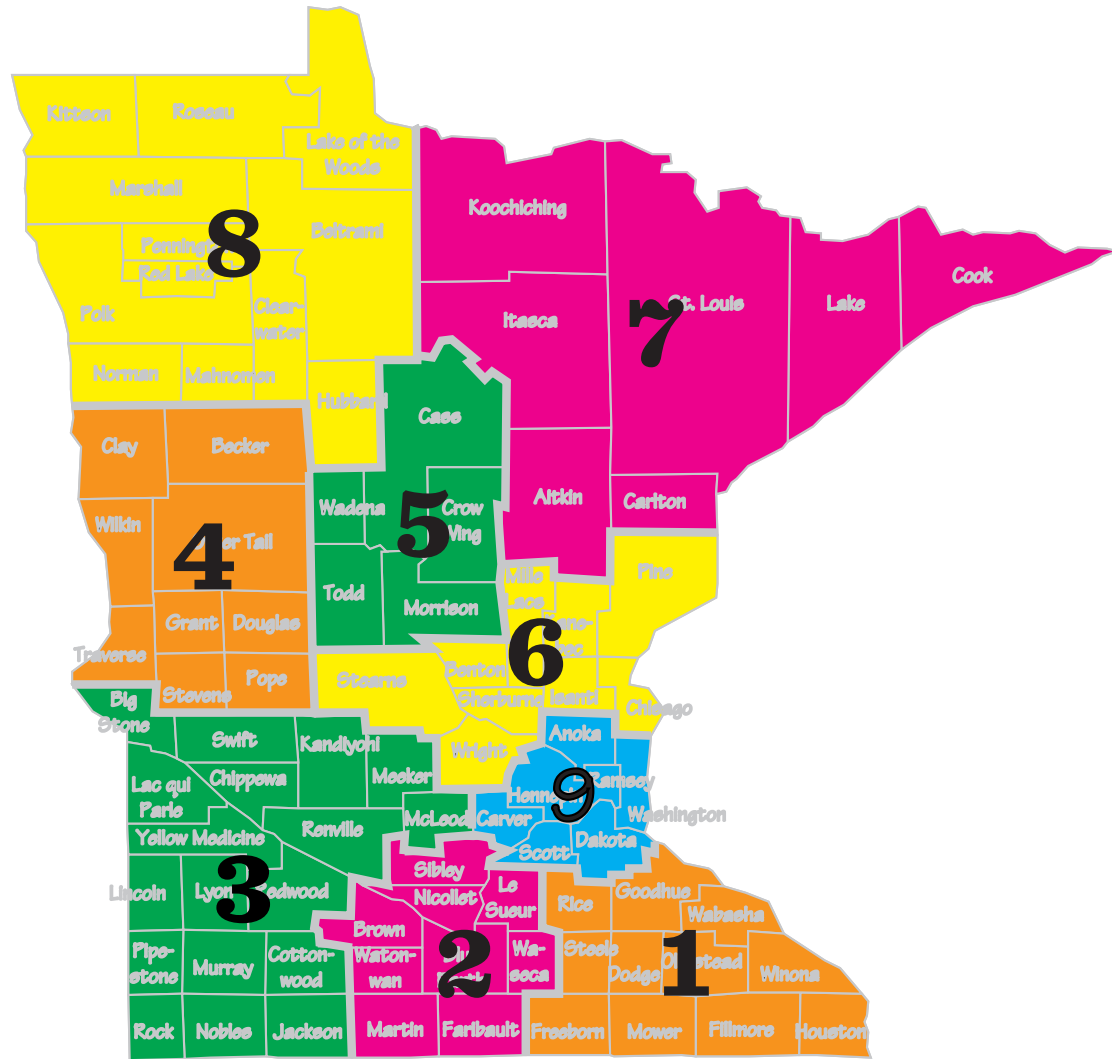
2. Looking forward, how can we best engage all segments of our communities to collaborate and create positive futures for Minnesota's schools and youth?
3. What are our next steps for developing this collective capacity for "our community?" And, what can we pass on to the next Minnevate! groups that will explore these issues?

The MASE group was invited to respond to the question, *what do we need to keep in mind for special education?*

A Minnevate!-focused Twitter conversation with Minnesota educators was held using the #mnlead hashtag on April 27, 2014. Data was collected and posted to the Minnevate! website, but was not included in the analysis as the Minnevate! facilitators did not believe the conversation yielded rich-enough content for analysis.



## Minnevatel! regional meeting schedule



- Region 1: March 5, 2014** - Southeast Service Cooperative
- Region 2: April 24, 2014** - South Central Service Cooperative
- Region 3: April 9, 2014** - SW/WC Service Cooperative
- Region 4: May 13, 2014** - Lakes Country Service Cooperative
- Region 5: May 14, 2014** - National Joint Powers Alliance
- Region 6: May 5, 2014** - Resource Training and Solutions
- Region 7:** No meeting held to date
- Region 8: March 26, 2014** - Northwest Service Cooperative
- Region 9: April 29, 2014** - Metropolitan Educational Service Unit
- MASE Best Practices Conference: May 9, 2014** - Madden's Resort

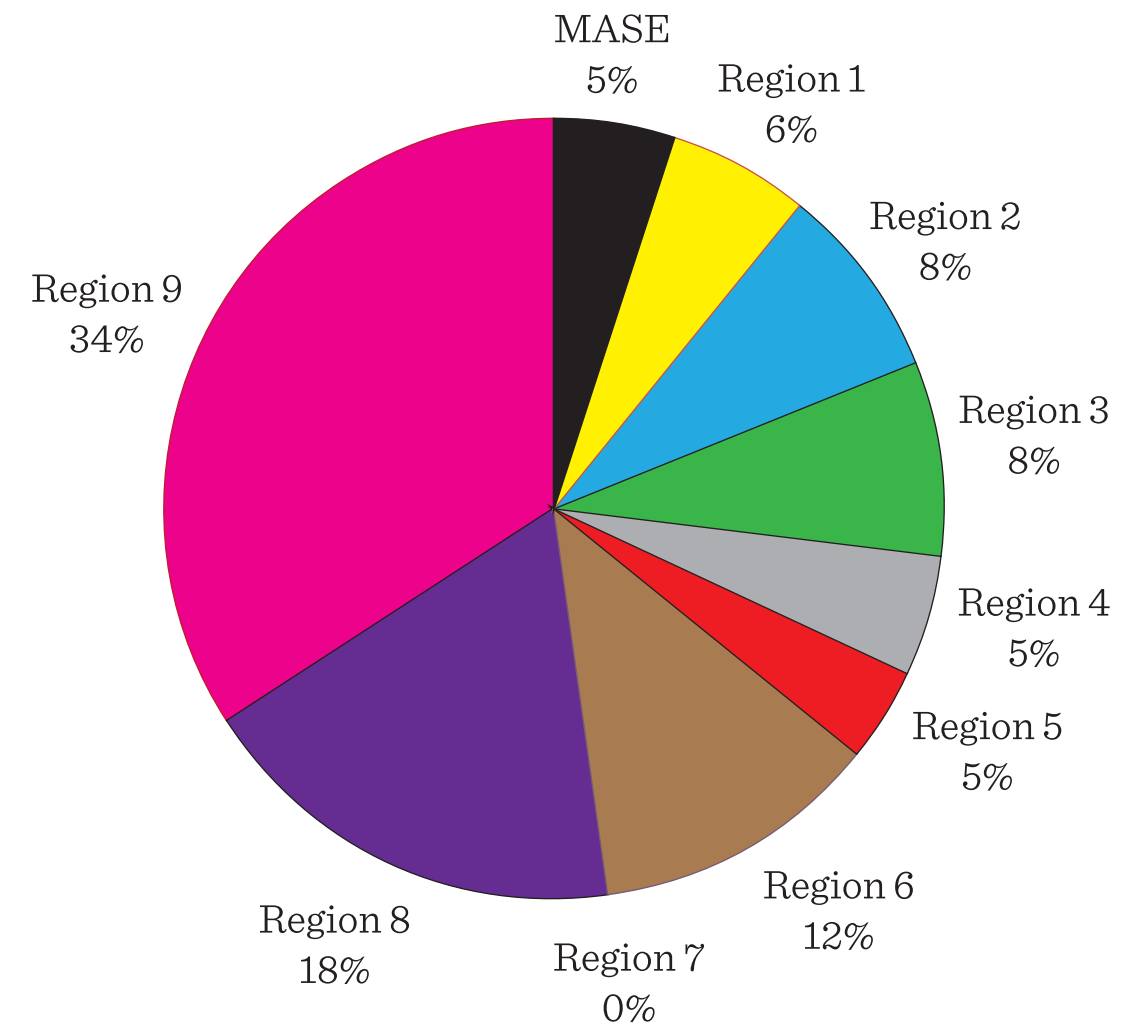
## Facilitators

**John Moravec, Aaron Ruhland, and Mia Urick** provided facilitation leadership for all Minnevatel! events. Each table appointed a "host" during their first World Café round to take notes and report back to the Minnevatel! facilitators summaries of their conversations.

## Data overview

**Approx. registered participants:** 287 (eight MASA regional meetings plus one MASE session)  
**Minnevatel! regional meeting dates:** March 5 - May 14, 2014  
**Average meeting group size:** 32  
**Minnevatel! table reports analyzed:** 31  
**Coded excerpts:** 943

## Distribution of coded excerpts





## Reporting methodology

Analysis of the Minnevate! qualitative responses employed an open coded, inductive strategy. The purpose of the analysis is to identify themes and patterns that inform the creation of an action agenda for MASA today as the organization heads to the future.

Dedoose version 4.12.14 (a Web platform) was used to code final round data into categories, and Microsoft Excel 2011 software was used to further sort, organize, and make any necessary revisions to the coding produced. The resultant, sorted, coded categories were then sorted into ten broader categories for reporting and discussion.

Since the fully qualitative portion of this study depended on World Café notes recorded by different note keepers at each session, descriptive statistical data on the frequency and magnitude of response items are not measured. To help ensure the data were coded and reported accurately, a draft report of the final round results was shared with all participants through the Minnevate! website and in-person meetings, and feedback, corrections, and additions to the items it contained were solicited. Comments received were compared with the coded themes reported, and corrections, additions and deletions were made as necessary.

In the following summary, codes ranked within the top 10 frequency counts for each question are described in detail (in descending order of frequency for each question) to illustrate the Minnevate! conversation, and a full list of codes and frequency of reporting by region is included with this report as an appendix. All raw data collected are available online at <http://minnevate.mnasa.org/inside/ideas/>.

## Conversation summary

### **Question 1: What is our boldest vision for positive education futures in Minnesota?**

Participants reported that **new assessment measures** are desired that assess capacity for growth and learning while continuing accountability. New standards are needed that perhaps resemble Minnesota's former Profiles of Learning. "Assessment" does not necessarily mean "test," and formative measures are needed for teachers to determine student learning. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores can serve as milestones until a better evaluation process can assess students' creativity and innovation skills. In regard to school assessment, one group asked, how can we work cooperatively vs. competitively when Minnesota schools are compared vis-à-vis school report cards?

The promotion of **soft skills** development (i.e., critical thinking, life skills, teamwork, character development, communication, and emotional intelligence) emerged in contrast to the drilling of standards. The world (including parenting) has changed, and learning also takes place outside of the classroom – perhaps even more so beyond school than within it. Students need to be taught *how* to learn, not *what* to learn. We need a better balance in requirements for academic and soft skills, and project-based learning and collaborations with our communities may help schools achieve this.

Students learn differently, and **personalized/individualized learning** and **differentiated learning** options can help each student maximize his or her full potential by focusing on plans based on skills needed. In a customized learning environment, students could keep track of the standards that they master, and compile a passport of knowledge and skills that can be carried over to post-secondary studies or their careers. This move away from universal, standards-based instruction would free up teachers to learn more about their students and passions and enable them to better serve as guides and consultants for students' success. Such a movement toward holistic personal growth may help to separate educational success from economic indicators.



An **engaged community** can help bridge the gap between *them* and *us*. There is a notion that schools are different from the communities we serve, and we need to create bridges with our communities to change mindsets and build support for schools. Collaborations need to include those who do not have children in schools as well as institutions that support the needs of learners: housing, social, religious, cultural, businesses, and families, among others. We have opportunities to engage at conferences, open houses, concerts, and other events where community members interface with schools. Small, rural communities can collaborate to keep their brightest youth to sustain agricultural opportunities. An education that is inclusive and embraces community assets can help blur the lines between secondary and post-secondary education.

Educator training has not changed in recent years, but the roles of teachers and administrators are changing. We need new **professional**

**development** options to train and support teachers and leaders for 21st century schools. Just as students need personalized training, teachers should have personalized training in how to guide students through their own processes of personalized learning. Time for professional development is currently limited, and we should make time to provide for it in our schools (i.e., the entire month of August).

Participants expressed a desire to **reform compliance standards** and accountability measures from one that is focused on compliance toward one that is focused on engagement. We should embrace competency-based learning, and fund mechanisms to support increased growth models. We can see great growth in all buildings, and our school boards could come back to us and say, "you really set expectations high – how will you grow next year?" And, at the end of the year, we have to build from those numbers regardless of the work we do. We need to move away from the huge "spider





web” of state testing. Standards-based learning can become a byproduct of an improved accountability model.

A bold vision where students are **responsible for their own education** was expressed by many MinneVate! participants: We need to change the attitude in school from rules and consequences to a formula where we can help students learn and grow from choices made. And, we need to develop independent learners who can advocate for what they need to know, how they learn best, and what they need for support in their learning. Students can be ignited to pursue their passions and be highly engaged in their own learning. This requires greater teacher preparation for environments where students serve as (co-)leaders in their own learning.

**Adequate funding** leads to positive education futures in Minnesota, where financial resources may be mobilized to support accomplishing our visions: More personnel, less employee burnout, more resources devoted toward developing creative teachers, and resources to provide each student with an individual learning plan. At a basic level, we still need to provide funds to eliminate obstacles such as transportation. And, a “quality education” needs to be defined versus an “adequate education.”

We need a **better transition to higher education**. There has been a noticeable deterioration of the quality of students entering college. Whereas university learning used to be centered on discussion, students are now disengaged from the conversation and look for new ways to learn. Are we preparing students who are prepared for college after high school, or are we pressuring students into higher education? Can we build better congruence between secondary and post-secondary education? Do we want to continue to hold students in high schools until they are 18 if they show that they are ready for college at an earlier age?

In a culture of **high expectations**, our definition of *success* changes when we eliminate policy that supports meeting minimum goals. All kids should have the skills to continue learning and being successful in the paths *they* choose. This requires high expectations for students

and staff, and provides opportunities for deep connections with our communities. Just as we helped to level the playing field for all Minnesota kids with all-day, everyday kindergarten, we can provide greater opportunity through one-to-one technology initiatives.

Schools that are **involved with parents** bring families into the planning and direction of learning, connecting and moving beyond school walls. This should start earlier (pre-K), and incorporate families from all demographic profiles: socioeconomic status, culture, race, etc.

**Question 2: Looking forward, how can we best engage all segments of our communities to collaborate and create positive futures for Minnesota’s schools and youth?**

When we **engage our communities**, we can offer conversations about how we can better support schools. This can be done broadly to include those who do not have children in schools, and the conversation can be extended to support schools in ways that are not just financial. This is about *engagement*, not communication. We need to get out, and go door-to-door and talk face-to-face to meet our community, and embrace those who may not have had an enjoyable learning experience during their schooling. “Our school system has really been based on the school being the holder of everything, the teacher was the holder of information. Content driven, compliance driven. Breaking that mold, that learning can take place outside of the classroom. That the community can be a partner.”

Participants reported that we need to **connect with businesses**, not only as schools, but to also connect students with businesses at a young age to develop experience and awareness of career-based needs of employers. Students want real-world-relevant learning, and we can expand internships and mentorships to expose them to the realities of work beyond school. We need to call, invite, follow-up, and actively encourage connection building with businesses and agencies and with organizations for students. This provides opportunities for students to hear from those hiring as opposed to those teaching, and can include the creation of career academies as a





form of community partnership. Collaborating with businesses is also a meaningful way to develop “buy-in” to schools’ agendas from our communities.

Schools need to **lead the conversation**. Viewing it not as their primary job, they do not convene community groups in conversation, and often receive a fair amount of criticism. It is hard to engage people in dialogue about improving schools. We self-censor ourselves. Educational leaders should bring all parties at the table to listen to each other, and engage each other in the planning process. “We have the ability to say that we don’t have all the answers,” but we need to be upfront about what we need and want. We can tell our schools’ stories, and share them through conventional dialogue and social media. We cannot expect the community to bring the conversation to us, we need to create it on “their turf” in addition to tapping into school open houses, fall conferences, sporting events, fine arts performance,

and other traditional community engagement moments.

We need to **engage students** and permit them a voice in an improvement process along with teachers and parents. As stakeholders, students possess valuable information, and they need to be heard – not removed from the conversation. Often they know exactly what is wrong and what the possible pathways for correction are. We need to understand their perspectives on schooling, and what their dreams and aspirations are so that we can offer pathways for advancement. Student interaction can also extend beyond schools, and connect with community members. If we develop the habit of involving students in our communities, students may be more willing to continue their service as adults.

To improve “buy-in” from our communities, we need to **improve communications**. We often work hard on development and planning, but

fail to communicate our efforts to the public. In addition, we need to understand that communication is not a unidirectional promotion tool, but is a two-way conversation. This requires us to think differently to engage and invite in conversation. We can use social media technologies to improve connections, and create goals for parents, businesses, and other community members. We need to stop thinking we have all the answers and **listen** more. We can build bridges and meet people on terms that increase collaboration. We need to work with frameworks that do not attend to a separation of “us” versus “them.”

We need to **engage** and **involve parents**, and let them take an active role in our schools. Many parents are too busy to engage in traditional ways, and we need to find new opportunities to work on relationship building. Schools have not been positive for some families, and our innovations can generate pushback from them. We need to engage better to understand what they want, and work together in the education of their children.

Schools need to **do research** within our communities before making decisions. Too often, our traditional approaches (i.e., door knocking) occur too late in the process to be impactful. We need to stop making assumptions about our communities, and engage in survey research and focus group conversations with our stakeholders. Within schools, we can survey parents, school employees, and students about how we are doing and how we can improve. When we **understand our communities**, we can have a greater appreciation for our cultures and the needs of universities and businesses.

Schools need to **expand mentorship programs** and career exploration activities so that students see applied value for their education. We need to emphasize training students to make good decisions through mentorship and de-emphasize what is not important (i.e., “dress up day” during homecoming). One option would be to provide pathways to shadow a career by offering credits.

In urban and rural communities, we need to **address diversity issues**. In districts with high percentages of students of color, engaged

parents are almost all white. The communities we engage with should be representative of the communities we serve – not just a subset. Students are more accepting of difference than adults, but school staff are afraid of students of color – especially young, black men.

By **teaching soft skills**, we can help students learn the proficiencies necessary to be caring, considerate, hardworking, and dependable; and, to also help them succeed in collaborating, interviewing, leadership, and community service. Soft skills development is intended to help our children function in society, and take on real responsibilities in life.

*Question 3: What are our next steps for developing this collective capacity for “our community?” And, what can we pass on to the next Minnevate! groups that will explore these issues?*

Participants reported we should **continue Minnevate! research** and **continue the conversation** through Minnevate!-like think tank experiences. Data may be collected from different regions, analyzed for similarities and differences, and representatives from sessions could be brought together to meet and validate needs for districts and MASA. This coordination can help to build a shared vision at the state level that others outside of the education community can embrace. A concern emerged, however, that we are not bringing in the “right people” for the conversation, and that we need to expand the conversation to include others, including students who may be failing or have become disinterested in school.

We need to **involve our communities** to become more active in education, and we need to believe that we, likewise, have stakes in our communities as well. Our communities need to value all types of education and skills building, and we need to work on contextualizing what is learned in schools with real-world applications. “If our community knows what our values are, we will be successful” – we need to connect them with schools. We already get assistance from businesses and other community players in the form of donated computers, for example, but without WiFi, proper network connections, etc., we lack the systems ecology to maximize their contributions. We can





develop customized, regional frameworks to align services that can help communities work together. How can we create incentives to increase our community development capacities?

Stronger **district collaborations** are needed to create a true “we” among school leaders in Minnesota. We have common needs that we can come together around. Too often, we are *competitive* rather than *collaborative*, and they do not need to be mutual. We can engage in *coopertition!* Individual districts have much to learn what others around the state are doing. Within the system, we can create financial incentives to collaborate so that we move away from “loser” and “winner” dichotomies.

Educational leaders are hired to make decisions on teaching and learning in much the same way that doctors are hired to make decisions on how best set a broken arm. As part of this role, school leaders need to **lead the con-**

**versation** on developing collective capacities for our communities. They are responsible for helping the community to see the “big picture” and setting the agenda for solving the dilemma. We also have questions. A shared vision is important, even if it composed of many different ideas – are school leaders responsible for setting this vision? Should we wait for people who are fearful of change to catch up? Do we know if we are asking the right questions?

What if students, teachers, and administrators were equal partners? We can **engage students** to find each of their sparks. Students need to make sure their voices are heard and they are incorporated into our planning. By getting them out in to the community, and by better supporting them, we can ensure they are more confident in their future success and have a better-developed sense of self-efficacy.

We need to **communicate the urgency** about our conversations, the need for change, and

for building a model of education for the future. Minnesota has good schools, but how do we get to *great*? We have become complacent. We should not wait for final outcomes, but start using ideas today – and get our communities to see *why* we are engaged in these activities, and incorporate immediate steps the community will need to take (“connecting the dots”).

There is a lot of pressure on students regarding what they “should be” when they are done with school, but we do not know what careers will exist in five years. We need to **create a shared vision**, where we understand the “what” issues better before we get to work on the “how” questions of educational change. We should talk about “tight” issues and key values that we all agree on, and create a common base of values for all students. This value needs to be articulated, and other key partners (esp. higher education) need to be a part of the discussion. Sharing key values does not

mean that we will work on the same ideas, but we will contextually apply our values to support ideas that are important to us.

We should **link schools to community education**, creating opportunities for continuous education for *all* learners. As a way to develop community linkages, this is a way to get people back into school buildings, and we should focus on getting people into schools earlier – from birth. We may tap into cultural groups, and incorporate food and drinks into get-togethers.

Using frameworks such as servant leadership, we should **develop community leadership** within our schools. We can create focus groups to work on issues, and create master plans with participation from businesses and the communities we serve. Multiple communities have already been encouraged to build collective capacities through consolidation efforts, but we need to encourage collective communi-



ties to identify assets, niches, and opportunities for collaboration. We need to allow people to find their own voices, and output those voices to our communities.

Instead of working *for* them, we need to **engage businesses** through a new paradigm where we are working *with* them. When businesses struggle to find workers, they connect with schools. They can help students in their career development, and start education programs to create jobs. We need to sit down with local businesses and chambers of commerce as real partners, and not just work with them for access to money.

Building a collective capacity requires that we need to **improve communications** to build relationships while making sure we honor all perspectives. This includes engaging the community in marketing and communications that elicit responses. Within the education community, we need to share what works, and share what has failed. How can we get the word out about “cool,” important things?

School leaders work individually, but we all get energy from each other when we work together. We need to **share opportunities for collaboration**, including around funding. There are many opportunities flowing in parallel, but we do not have mechanisms for learning about possibilities, helping others, or for replicating partnerships.

We need to **understand ourselves**, know our communities, our students, and our schools. And, by understanding the actors in our communities, we can build relationships of engagement, build a shared vision, and generate greater respect for the people we have. On the other hand, when we understand ourselves better, we gain a better perspective if what everyone is doing is worthy within our shared vision.

## Summary of the MASE conversation

We need to **involve parents** to a greater degree in special education, and provide them with honest feedback around issues at home. This can include addressing the **mental health**

issues of parents, which could be beneficial their kids as well as the mental wellness of our staff. Collocated mental health services could be located in schools, but complexities of providing access (i.e., insurance) need to be addressed.

Educators should be **provided resources** and tools to address student needs. These include access to learning technologies and access to core instruction that is effective and appropriate. These resources could be aligned to **differentiated or individualized learning** that connect with student and teacher passions. We can create individual growth plans for all students that are owned by all stakeholders.

Novel **professional development** is needed that provides more in-depth training options. Time needs to be allocated better at schools for special education teachers to prepare. We need to **reform compliance and regulations regimes** to allow for more freedom and for creativity and innovations to emerge within schools. If we shift toward being more competency and portfolio-based, we can still have state testing, but it will co-exist with other measurement approaches.

Finally, participants voiced that we should take a **systems perspective**, and work beyond the schools. We should **engage advocacy groups**, and **explore non-postsecondary options** for students. College may not be the “right” answer for many students after high school, and we should look into alternative platforms for “success” in the postsecondary world.



The Minnevale! process has been an incredibly valuable learning experience for me related to my work in educational leadership and my doctoral dissertation process. One of the theories underlying my research is that the manner in which educational policy is developed and enacted does not account for local values and conditions, leading to ineffective and inefficient implementation. Connected to studies of school finance, assumptions about a rational connection between policy inputs and educational outputs often don't account for those inefficiencies or other outcomes deemed important for local schools and regions. Instead, the methods for evaluating funding adequacy reinforce narrowly defined outputs, measured by standardized tests, for the purpose of creating the most efficient state finance system.

Minnevale! was an attempt to hear the authentic voices of regional leaders, their aspirations, vision, priorities, and needs. At many of those sessions, I was struck by how passionately local leaders wanted to move beyond the current rhetoric and policy challenges to build consensus around a vision for the future. I also heard stark differences in needs, structures,

community resources, relationships, and leadership challenges across the state of Minnesota. Theories about how prescriptive state policy initiatives inhibited local leaders from developing true community consensus and commitment to local schools were borne out by the stories of local leaders.

Minnevale! provided opportunities to break down silos in our communities and organizations and include voices representing the business community, legislature, higher education, citizens, and teachers. Yet, we found that regional collaboration was limited, with a few regions describing genuine collaborative vision and priorities. Most of the Minnevale! sessions reinforced that silos across institutions, organizations, and political factions continue to be barriers to innovation. Regional meetings exemplified that it was difficult to lead a collaborative effort across organizations and communities even within regions, much less across the state. Educational and community leaders need to develop capacity related to skills and processes that enable effective cross-sector collaboration

and the right incentives to engage in the work.

On a final note, much of my leadership work is centered around standards-based accountability and interpretation and response to standardized test scores. After years of this being the monopolized policy mechanism in the United States, Minnevale! participants clearly voiced a desire to move beyond this energy-draining perspective. If accountability models reflect the adage “what gets measured gets done” how can we continue to measure success based on a narrow definition of attributes and skills defined last century? Continuing to try and make an outdated system work more efficiently using regulatory policy mechanisms will not even sustain us into the future. Society needs educational and community leaders to create divergent solutions that meet the contemporary needs of all children. The promise of Minnevale! is hope. Hope that a collective, energized effort is possible through inspirational leaders and organizations working together.

*Aaron Ruhland  
Minnevale! co-facilitator*





# Discussion

Throughout the regional Minnevale! conversations, participants frequently presented bold (“big picture”) and practical (often job-oriented) visions for positive education futures in Minnesota, but the pathways toward realizing them are often unclear. For example, participants expressed a desire for new assessment measures and a greater emphasis on soft skills development in schools, but there is a gap in leadership and trust among actors in driving actions necessary to make these changes happen.

Often, obstacles are externalized through an “us versus them,” dichotomist thinking, where school leaders view themselves at odds with – or disconnected from – their peers and the communities they serve. In our conversations, this was often reflected as a lack of confidence in legislators, an apprehension in connecting with businesses more meaningfully, and a feeling that districts are driven to compete rather than collaborate.

Despite this, participants expressed a desire to share, collaborate, and transcend self-interest toward the creation of a greater common good. In a follow-up conversation of these findings with the Richard Green Scholars and the Minnevale! International Advisory Panel, an inherent **lack of trust** among actors in Minnesota’s education system was hypothesized to be the greatest issue that contributes toward

the formation of a culture of non-collaboration. A sense has emerged that school administrators, legislators, business leaders, parents, and other community members do not trust each other to create a collective capacity to build positive futures for education in Minnesota.

The need for developing trust is best reflected in participant responses to the second Minnevale! question: *Looking forward, how can we best engage all segments of our communities to collaborate and create positive futures for Minnesota’s schools and youth?* The most frequent response was that we need to engage our communities. In essence, the question was repeated back in the form of a solution.

If school leaders are not leading the conversation for building positive education futures in their communities and Minnesota, then who is? This **leadership gap** in developing a culture of trust between schools and the communities they serve to lead the conversation for building a collective capacity to innovate in Minnesota presents itself as a strategic opportunity for MASA, its members, and its partners.

At the same time, there is a sense that our schools are operationally excellent. To a great extent, educational leaders believe Minnesota’s schools are fulfilling their obligations per the requirements prescribed to them by law. As T. Bert Lance is attributed to have coined the cli-



ché phrase, *if it ain't broke, don't fix it*. Indeed, why promote change if the system is working well?

At the same time, Minnevate! participants recognize that we need to prepare youth today for careers and jobs that we cannot possibly imagine today. A **sense of urgency** is needed to break from the comfortable, creative inertia of the industrial form of education that we have become so operationally excellent in, and this urgency needs to be applied to generate momentum for more creative and innovative strategic directions for education in a post-industrial society.

This presents itself as a second strategic opportunity for MASA: Contribute toward building a collective capacity for innovation in Minnesota education by advocating for the urgency of change and developing excitement for the opportunities for schools as we face the future.

# Findings and strategic opportunities

The Minnevate! project was explorative, qualitative, and normative in its taxonomy. The data collection and analysis conducted through the World Café method was used to provide inputs on our boldest visions for Minnesota's education futures and how we can generate pathways toward creating a collective capacity for realizing our bold visions. As with any qualitative research project, the findings are not necessarily generalizable, but serve to inform MASA and its members in the formation of their strategic directions, including an action agenda for Minnesota school administrators, legislative leaders, business leaders, and other key members of the communities its members serve.

While the World Café questions were designed to identify tangible visions, directions, and strategic actions, we were surprised that deep, intangible, core issues emerged that present themselves as *strategic opportunities* for MASA:

1. **Lead the conversation** about creating positive education futures in Minnesota, identify the champions, and identify the sources of innovation in our communities.
2. Attend toward **creating a culture of trust** between and among schools and the communities they serve.

3. **Develop a sense of urgency** for building positive education futures as opposed to maintaining a passive culture of compliance-only actions.

The practical implication of this work is that it provides guidance for MASA in its strategic planning cycle that will begin in late 2014. The Minnevate! project provides critical insight into the contexts in which MASA and its members can work to build a collective capacity to realizing our bold visions for education in Minnesota.

## Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

While the Minnevate! project was designed to identify an action agenda for adoption by MASA, the leadership and cultural development aspects of this project's findings suggest that the organization can use the outputs of this project to help establish its longer-term strategic planning. More specifically, building upon the strategic opportunities presented above, MASA should adopt an agenda for action:

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<sup>1</sup> MASA's past and present Richard Green Scholars, Minnevate! International Advisory Panel, and selected community partners were consulted on August 6, 2014 to contribute their perspectives to this section of recommendations.



1. Lead the conversation and set a large, measurable vision for education in Minnesota as the state faces new, unpredictable futures.
  - a. Ask *why* questions that impact our futures (i.e., *Why* is the homeschooling movement growing? *Why* do we operate large special education programs? Etc.)
  - b. Investigate *what* and *how* questions (i.e., For *what* are we preparing kids? *What* is the evidence on creating systems change? *How* do we build capacities for change?)
  - c. Develop a theory of action for MASA's continued strategic engagement with its key constituents in Minnesota.
2. Continue Minnevote! conversations across the state, bringing communities and schools together in safe environments to build cultures of trust and cooperation.
  - a. Design a mechanism to bring more voices into the discussion.
  - b. Recognize and embrace divergent strategies for educational improvement.
  - c. Identify champions that can help lead the conversation and build a collective capacity.
  - d. Engage the sources of innovation in our communities that MASA and its members can leverage to further develop its strategic opportunities.
3. Establish measurement standards that can be used to monitor the efficacy of MASA's Minnevote! programming in relation to MASA's strategic priorities.
4. Understanding that leadership for change requires a significant commitment and lasting, supportive presence, pledge at least six years of resources to support MASA's work related to the Minnevote! strategic opportunities.

actions should mirror the grassroots, co-creative spirit of the project's original design. These recommended next steps for MASA in 2014-2015 are centered on the engagement of its members as co-thought leaders in meeting the organization's Minnevote! strategic opportunities:

1. **Establish work groups:** Engage Richard Green scholars (and other identified thought leaders within the MASA community) to work from the Minnevote! data from 2014 and build the "next steps" for MASA in the form of a declaration and action agenda.
2. **Develop focus groups:** Continue the Minnevote! conversation in each of MASA's nine regions through facilitated focus group conversations, and drill down to specifics for actions and policy directions that can be carried out by MASA. This work should complement (and inform) the activities of the Richard Green scholars.
3. **Come together at a summit:** Convene a summit of experts (including MASA members) at the 2015 Back-to-School Leadership Conference to review and revise the recommendations crafted by the Minnevote! research team and the Richard Green scholars before formal adoption as an action agenda by the MASA Board of Directors.

While the above action agenda outlines general, longer-term goals, specific, short-term



We designed this project around a basic question: *Can we come together to build a collective capacity to create positive futures for Minnesota's schools and youth?* The question is deceptively simple, but the answer that emerged, I believe, is very sobering for all stakeholders in Minnesota's education system. We found that we need to attend to building trust in our schools, communities, and our state before we can truly come together to build positive education futures.

Conversations are a powerful way to learn about one's self and the world we live in, and to share with others. Nobody can predict, with clarity, what the future landscape for education and work will look like in the next decade. Where we will ultimately arrive is not the result of a boardroom or legislative decision, but rather the product of a seemingly infinitely complex system of human actors, interests, and dreams. If we want positive futures for our communities, we must join the conversation.

The aim of the Minnevote! project was to create an action agenda for Minnesota educational leadership, and we kept the agenda as open and transparent as possible – formulating

Minnevote! as a conversational process as opposed to a traditional strategic planning product. For those of us in the field of educational leadership, this is very difficult. We like to know what we are getting into in advance, and do everything we can to avoid uncertain outcomes. It's a part of how we strive for "operational perfection" in our schools. But, is it relevant?

Again, the question we started with is deceptively simple, and instead of gaining clear answers, we sparked further questions that caused us to reflect deep within ourselves. Who are the "we" that can come together to build a collective capacity? Are "we" at the Minnevote! events the right people to have this conversation? Why are "we" the ones that participated in these conversations and not "them?"

This dichotomous *us* vs. *them* relationship highlighted the difficulties of school leaders to engage the communities they serve, including engaging students, parents, businesses, and legislators. We noted a real hunger to continue this conversation so, as schools, communities, and as a state, we

can seize upon new strategic opportunities.

This conversation took a lot of courage, and I applaud MASA for leading it across the state. For me, it has been a real honor and joy to work on this project, and I look forward to its continued development. Through projects such as Minnevote!, we *can* and we *will* build positive futures for Minnesota's schools and youth.

**John Moravec**  
*Minnevote! co-facilitator*



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**All raw data collected from the Minnevale project are available online at <http://minnevale.mnasa.org/inside/ideas/>.**