Thanksgiving...A Time for Reflection

by Karen Underwood, MCASE President

Happy Thanksgiving! With our first major holiday just around the corner, I am reminded of the value of taking time for reflection. We have a great deal to be thankful for in the state of Montana. Despite our challenges and sometimes because of these same challenges, we offer a solid education to all our students. Moving to a more specialized area of education several years ago, I am ever more grateful for the dedication our colleagues demonstrate; the support, trust, and active involvement shown by the parents of our students; and the work ethic exercised by our students.

As we move through our school year, I invite you to meet the challenges of our profession while truly appreciating the dedication of those around you and appreciating the process involved in making progress. Most recently, we need to be impressed and bolstered by the collaborative efforts shown during this past legislature. Recall just a few years ago when educational entities were competing with each other and forwarding separate agendas.

As we all know, the needs of our students are growing. More is required of us in order to address their needs, talents, and future roles. We have underserved gifted students, unfunded mandates for special education students, and understaffed classrooms. Obviously, we need financial support and we are compelled to be creative with all our resources including time, facilities, money, and personnel. Nonetheless, we see districts approaching their receptive communities with building projects and following a principled path of commitment.

Facing our challenges, we need to develop the professionals and be thankful for those who have selected education as a career. We need to look at not only recruitment but also development and retention of those individuals who have selected this career path. We are fortunate to have professional development tools like SAM, CSPD, OPI, our universities, etc., for developing the staffs within our schools including our support staffs and particularly our paraprofessionals. We likewise have the advantages technology affords our delivery of professional support so that we are no longer tied to specific times, places, or limited topics.

We are in an exciting time to support our teachers. It is easier for us to seek opportunities for them and to be responsive to their professional needs. Along these lines, we are also obligated to address their everyday responsibilities like being cognizant of class sizes or caseloads, additional non-teaching responsibilities, and overall demands.

An additional and difficult responsibility we have is to recruit and train successful special education substitutes for both our teacher and paraprofessional positions. Many of our substitutes shy away from assignments in special education classrooms simply because they are not aware of the roles which they will be asked to perform. We can strip away these inhibitions if we are more deliberate in our training and role delineations. Thankfully, there are resources available.

As yet another way to support, we need to address our own professional growth and how it influences teachers’ work and, in turn, student success. Our professional development in becoming more knowledgeable of functional behavior assessments, being active members in developing behavior plans, and being “process leaders,” where we use our roles to complement our service providers, is ever more important. We jeopardize our effectiveness and our teachers’ efforts if we do not engage actively in the processes associated with our roles and most especially the special education process.

I am grateful too that we have already laid the necessary foundation for effective progress monitoring within our schools. These activities benefit all our educational efforts and definitely support the development of special education plans. Given the Endrew F. Supreme Court decision at the beginning of the year, we are reminded to do our jobs well in documenting student progress to ensure “meaningful educational benefit,” creating defensible IEP’s, and engaging parents actively in our processes. We need solid, reliable and frequent data to accomplish these tasks. Our current and future expanded efforts in this direction will serve all well.

And last but not least, I am grateful for the skill set administrators possess. We actively listen and we can provide our audiences with our full attention. Our direct contact with people is all the more critical in these technological times. As you well know, we have many competing responsibilities as school leaders and ever-fluctuating priorities, but we compromise all our efforts if we fail to step back and listen well.
And of course, we can reflect. Give yourself some quiet time once in a while and reflect upon the valuable and complex role you provide in educating the youth of Montana. Personally, I want to thank you for what you do. I commend you for the time and expertise you bring to your careers. I am grateful for what you provide the youth of our state. So as I look to Thanksgiving, I will be thinking of each of you and, humbly, I thank you.

Happy Thanksgiving,

Karen Underwood, MCASE President
follow these steps:

To modify your e-list email notification settings, go to the [SAM website](#) and click on "Member Login" at the top of the page. Login to your SAM profile with your Username (your email address) and your Password.

2. Click on "My Profile" in the Quick Links menu.

3. Hover over "My Features" and click on "E-Lists".

4. Keep the email delivery to ON if you prefer to receive e-list messages through your email, or turn the email delivery to OFF if you prefer to view messages from your email inbox.

Advocacy

We are continuing to monitor and pay attention to the status of state revenues, potential proposed MCA 17-7-140 statewide cuts, and even the potential of a Special Legislative Session. As information comes available, we will post it on the [SAM Advocacy Issues 2017-18 webpage](#). We are updating information on [Federal Issues](#) impacting Montana education under the 'Advocacy' tab on the SAM website. SAM members approved the [SAM Advocacy Priorities, Positions and Resolutions](#) at the SAM Annual Business Meeting at MCEL on October 19, 2017. Our goal is to make it easy for you to check out what is going on in advocacy without having it divert your attention from the main thing.

Your effort to keep student learning in focus is one of the reasons why our Montana students do so well. Thanks for your leadership of our Montana schools! I hope you have a great November!

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**Changes to Your Affiliate E-List**

You may have noticed changes to your affiliate e-list. Each affiliate president voted at the October 19th SAM Board meeting to change the response structure of the affiliate e-list from "Reply to Author" to "Reply to Entire List". Many members have communicated that they want to see the responses to emails that are sent through their affiliate e-list. However, if you do not want your affiliate’s e-list communication being sent to your email inbox, you have the ability to modify your notification settings. You have the option to receive e-list messages through your email or to view the messages through your SAM profile on the website.

To modify your e-list email notification settings, follow these steps:

1. Go to the [SAM website](#) and click on "Member Login" at the top of the page. Login to your SAM profile with your Username (your email address) and your Password.

2. Click on "My Profile" in the Quick Links menu.

3. Hover over "My Features" and click on "E-Lists".

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**Advocacy Issues 2017-18**

- **Meta Administrator of the Year Award (Due Feb. 9)** This prestigious award recognizes excellence in the professional development and implementation of outstanding leadership in providing high-quality education within their building. These principals are recognized by their peers for the contributions they have made to their students, staff, and community in implementing educational excellence.

- **MAEMSP – Community Partner in Education Award (Opening in January)** This award is given to a private citizen outside the professional educational field.

- **MAEMSP – Future Administrators Scholarship (Opening in January)** This award comes in the form of a $1100 scholarship provided to a graduate student who is in at least their 2nd semester of an approved course of study for the Master of Education Degree in Secondary School Administration. The candidate cannot be financially supported by a school district and cannot be a double recipient of the MAEMSP and MAASSP scholarships. Finally, the candidate must also intend to keep working in Montana.

- **MAEMSP – National Distinguished Principal (Due Jan. 12)** Each year, these awards are given a special education director, a regular educator, and a special educator. Special education is a very trying but rewarding field. The Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education would like to annually award those special education leaders, special educators, and classroom teachers that excel at their positions and deserve to be recognized for their efforts.

- **MCASE – Distinguished Service Awards – Open Now for Nomination (Due Jan. 12)** Each year, these awards are given to a special education director, a regular educator, and a special educator. Special education is a very trying but rewarding field. The Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education would like to annually award those special education leaders, special educators, and classroom teachers that excel at their positions and deserve to be recognized for their efforts.

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**Save the Date!**
profile on the SAM website. Note: If you have turned your email delivery off, return to the E-List page on your SAM profile and click on the e-list to view and respond to messages that have been sent to your affiliate e-list.

All responses sent to an e-list message, either from your email inbox or your SAM profile, will be delivered to the entire e-list. If you would like to respond to the author only, you will need to compose a new email addressed only to that member.

If you are having difficulties accessing your SAM profile or have other questions concerning e-lists, please call or email Kim at the SAM office: (406)442-2510 or samks@sammt.org.

Click on the link to view an E-List Instructional Video.

Did You Know?

School leaders who are SAM members can sign up for a free CoSN membership under their district META membership!

Want to know more about CoSN and CoSN membership? Click on the links, talk to your district’s technology director, or call the SAM office!

Happy Thanksgiving from the SAM Team!

Thank you to SAM's Business Partners!

Please take time to visit their websites.

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