

Minnesota Association of School Administrators

1884 Como Avenue • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108 • (651) 645-6272, FAX (651) 645-7518

For Immediate Release: October 27, 2010

Contact: Mia Urick
Director of Professional Development
MASA
(651) 645-6272, FAX (651) 645-7518
urickm@mnasa.org

P R E S S
R E L E A S E

Electronic versions of this press release and Superintendent Staska's photograph are available. Please email Aimee Ranallo at MASA (aranallo@mnasa.org) to request copies.

Scott Staska is 2011 MN Superintendent of the Year

(St. Paul, Minn.) — The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Superintendent Scott Staska, Superintendent for ROCORI Schools, the 2011 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

“This recognition is truly humbling,” said Staska. “It is a wonderful confirmation of the hard work that has taken place across the ROCORI School District. It is a great recognition of the entire ROCORI team effort and approach.”



Superintendent Scott Staska

As the Minnesota honoree, Superintendent Staska is a candidate among other state winners for National Superintendent of the Year, to be announced at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) convention on February 17, 2010 in Denver, Colorado.

Superintendent of the Year nominees are evaluated on how each candidate demonstrates:

- Leadership for learning—creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication skills—strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- Professionalism—constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community involvement—active participation in local community activities and understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Superintendent Staska was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of
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Minnesota education organizations. “Scott Staska has become an extraordinary leader in his district,” says MASA Executive Director Dr. Charles Kyte. “He is highly respected by his colleagues in central Minnesota. We are very proud to have him represent Minnesota educators as Superintendent of the Year.”

Superintendent Staska has been superintendent for ROCORI Schools since 2002. With an enrollment of 2,150 students, ROCORI serves students in the communities of Rockville, Cold Spring and Richmond. The ROCORI District has three K-6 elementary buildings - one in each of the main cities. ROCORI Middle School serves students in grades seven and eight. The middle school program emphasizes a team instructional approach with a focus on strong academics, positive relationships and active involvement. The Senior High houses students in grades nine through twelve, and its program offers a wide variety of opportunities in core academics, college preparatory and vocational options. An extensive range of activities in athletics, fine arts, and academics are available throughout the district.

The ROCORI School Board Chair, Nadine Schnettler, nominated Superintendent Staska for the Superintendent of the Year Award, “We are very proud of our superintendent!”

“Scott is a very innovative leader,” said Chair Schnettler. Always looking for new methodology and technology to enhance district operations, Staska has introduced School Messenger, AESOP and MSBA Board Book for paperless board meetings. He has also partnered ROCORI with 14 Minnesota colleges and universities in the Teacher Preparation Initiative in an effort to help Minnesota effectively prepare and support newly-licensed teachers.

“Superintendent Staska is a thoughtful, committed leader, whose district has thrived under his leadership,” said Kathleen Ofstedal, Co-Director of the Bush Foundation Teacher Preparation Initiative, St. Cloud State University, in a letter of support for Staska’s nomination. “As Co-Director of the Teacher Preparation, I value his input as we work together to recruit, prepare, place and support our teacher candidates who will soon become the next generation of teachersI cannot think of a more deserving candidate.”

Leading the district through a multi-year \$29.9 million multi-campus construction project, which includes adding two new wings to the current high school facility and renovating what will be the former middle school into a district education center, has been Staska’s current major project. “Scott has been able to incorporate this large and time-consuming project into his already overloaded schedule, without skipping a beat,” said Chair Schnettler. Staska has continued his involvement with three civic and commerce associations, representing the three communities in his district, and began mentoring the new superintendent of Sartell Schools.

When asked to describe how ROCORI Schools has improved its district performance, Staska explained, “There have been a number of district initiatives over the last several years. Among the district initiatives has been the implementation of academic teams, a much closer examination of the test data and efforts to act in a “data-driven” manner, increased efforts to allow teachers time for collaboration, implementation of a number of programmatic efforts such as Response to Intervention, supporting learning strategies, examining specific curriculum areas, and taking a hard look at our expectations for all groups of students.” Staska continued, “Much of the credit for improvement has to go to the teaching staff for taking the reports and information seriously and beginning to focus on the areas needing improvement.”

Superintendent Staska has also made it a priority to communicate the district’s purpose and future with his constituencies. “Over the last several years, the ROCORI School District has been working to define the direction and future of the schools through a process we have called a ‘Strategic Roadmap,’ where we have defined our mission statement, core values, vision and strategic direction,” stated Staska. “Our mission statement and core values have been a very powerful statement of our core purpose. At ROCORI, we believe in creating a caring, learning and giving environment in which the values of being direct, appropriate, tolerant, positive, open, respectful, accepting and prepared are considered the foundation of our learning community.” The ROCORI “Strategic Roadmap” has been shared with constituents every 45 days, through publications such as articles in the local paper, district newsletters, local access television, community meetings and with local organizations.

Staska described how ROCORI Schools has improved the quality of teaching and leadership in its system, “Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents and education professionals to ensure students’ success ...we have allocated resources to structure more opportunities for teacher collaboration and discussion of professional learning issues through the development of teams focused on student learning needs.” Staska explained that these teams help to establish the professional and academic standards for the district with clearly articulated outcomes. Over the last three years, the ROCORI District has implemented value-added testing opportunities through the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing of the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). “ Each of these efforts have given our teachers more thorough, and better information to reach all students in the school district,” said Staska.

Superintendent Staska is also noted as a calm, effective leader navigating the district through several difficult times; including one that most school leaders will never have to experience. In 2003, just one year into his superintendency, Staska was forced to cope with a school shooting, and in 2009, ROCORI had the first case of H1N1 in the state of Minnesota. In a letter of support, Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce President, Duane Kuss, praised Staska for his ability to handle situations quickly and calmly, “There are few communities in this state, let alone this country, that have faced the challenges that the ROCORI District has witnessed over the past decade. Throughout it all, Mr. Staska’s cool, calming

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leadership helped guide the school district, the communities, and the entire state and national media through the different crises.” Kuss continued, “Scott Staska is the real thing through and through. He is a wise, caring professional and an even better community contributor who has truly made a difference in the lives of the people who grow up, live and thrive in the ‘Land of ROCORI’.”

“Scott always responds with quick and calming action,” explained Chair Schnettler. “His action plans include not just students and staff but the entire community as well. His leadership through crises of this nature has even been called upon as a model for other school districts throughout the nation.”

Superintendent Staska received his master of science degree from Minnesota State University-Moorhead and his bachelor of science degree from North Dakota State University. Before becoming Superintendent for the ROCORI Schools, he was superintendent for Yellow Medicine East Schools. Prior to the superintendency, Staska was a Secondary Assistant Principal and Secondary Principal for Barnesville Schools, then Senior High School Principal for Yellow Medicine East Schools.

MASA is a professional organization 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. MASA members are school superintendents, directors of special education, other central office school administrators, regional administrators, and higher education administrators and professors from throughout Minnesota.

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