

# NEWSLETTER

David W. Murphy, *President, (MSAD 44/RSU 44)*  
Suzanne T. Godin, *President-Elect, (South Portland)*  
Susan A. Pratt, *Vice President, (RSU 78)*  
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*"Better Schools for Maine Students"*

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## President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

It has been a pleasure to serve as your president this year. This experience has provided me with the opportunity to better realize the many great things that are happening across the state as a result

of the efforts being made by today's school leaders. We are fortunate to have many inspirational, dedicated and hard working people within our association. The Maine School Superintendents Association provides an important vehicle for all of us to share and build upon our individual efforts. Never was that more evident than at the recent Commissioner's Conference in Northport.

This year's conference demonstrated the kind of progress that can be made when we all have the chance to work together. For several days, we had a chance to hear directly from the Maine Department of Education, share our ideas with them and then discuss the same topics with hundreds of members of the Maine Principals' Association. I think it is safe to say that we were all able to leave that conference feeling that there were some common goals being set across the state. Kudos go to Jim Rier for his willingness to involve our associations in the planning of this event and to the members of MSSA, MSMA and MPA for their involvement in helping to build the conference agenda.

Monday night's banquet also allowed our organization to recognize many of our long-serving and retiring superintendents and assistant superintendents and to present some well-deserved awards to our peers. Harry Pringle of Drummond Woodsum was the recipient of this year's Distinguished Service Award and our own Bob Hasson received the Commissioner's Award from Commissioner Rier for his long-standing commitment to Maine education.

In closing, I thank you for having been given the opportunity to serve as your president this year. I wish Suzanne Godin all the best as she assumes this role for the coming year.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy summer!

Sincerely,

Dave Murphy, Ed.D., MSSA President

## Commissioner's Conference Well Focused and Well Attended

The 103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Commissioner's Conference which took place June 23<sup>rd</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup> at Point Lookout Resort and Conference Center in Northport, Maine focused on Proficiency Based Education (PBE) and Educator Effectiveness.

With more than 150 district administrators attending, the conference provided guidance, technical assistance, and communication tools to use with community members.

Sessions included Stephen Abbott, Great Schools Project, who spoke of the importance of delivering your message and offered strategies, individual sessions with DOE finance staff, the six extension options for PBE implementation, and several of our colleagues offering their experiences in implementing performance-based education in their systems. MSMA's own Charlotte Bates co-presented on policies necessary in implementing the legislation along with Deborah Friedman, DOE Director of Policy and Programs.

For the second year the conference coincided with the Maine Principals' Association Summer Leadership Retreat affording participants the opportunity to attend concurrent sessions from either conference.

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## Incoming MSSA President Suzanne Godin



Suzanne Godin has been an educator in Maine since 1982. In addition to teaching and administrative experience Suzanne has worked as Assistant Superintendent in South Portland beginning in 2004 and continued as Superintendent of Schools since 2007. She has focused on improving student achievement, supporting professional learning, developing Adult Education and Preschool programming, and providing safe physical environments for all students, staff and the community.

According to MSSA Executive Director Bob Hasson, "One of her focuses as President will be to encourage more leaders to become Superintendents of Schools."

Suzanne was named Maine's Superintendent of the Year in 2007.

## MSSA Mission Statement

*The Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA) is an organization that is committed to leadership:*

- *Leadership to provide equity, create opportunities for and promote the success of every student;*
- *Leadership to develop ethical, visionary and competent leaders by*
  - *Offering professional learning opportunities for leaders*
  - *Promoting community and legislative support for education*
  - *Providing member services*

## Thought for the Day...

*In recent years, many of us have come to feel that the common value in education as the number one priority of the state has been placed at risk. ...Education has become a political hot potato. While everyone claims to support public schools, many actions appear to say just the opposite.*

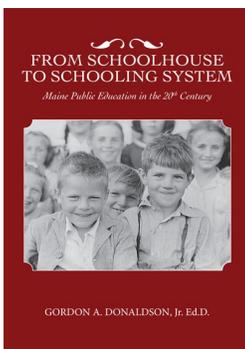
*~From "Its Up to Us: Education—A Right, or Just Rhetoric?" by Cynthia Lane, Superintendent, Kansas City, Kansas, on her blog Journey of a Superintendent*

## On Our Bookshelf...

[From Schoolhouse to Schooling System](#)  
[Maine Public Education in the 20th Century](#)



By Gordon A. Donaldson, Jr., Ed.D.



From *Schoolhouse to Schooling System* traces Maine's efforts to educate its children and youth through the twentieth century. It is a story of high ambitions, changing economic fortunes, and the struggle to form widespread community schools into a coherent system. Donaldson's book offers a richly detailed description of the past and the lessons it serves up for the future not only in Maine but across the country.

## Commissioner's Conference

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Materials from the conference may be accessed at the DOE website or you may [click here](#).

An annual highlight was the Monday evening Recognition Banquet where retiring superintendents along with colleagues were honored for years of service, Outstanding Leadership, Distinguished Service and the President's and Commissioner's awards. See page 4 for a complete list of honorees.

## What Motivates Teachers? Education Reformers Have No Idea

You gotta' admire those education reformers. Despite their almost total lack of experience in education and despite all the research and evidence that flies in the face of their bankrupt ideas, they cling to their ideology like a sloth to a low hanging vine. One area where I think they can come in for particular ridicule is teacher improvement. Basing their theories on the all encompassing business model, the education reformers have decided to motivate teachers through a system of threats and rewards.

Threats come in the form of threatening teacher's jobs by measuring teacher performance through student scores on standardized tests and weakening job protections through attacks on tenure rights. The apparent guiding principle is that teachers will be motivated to improve instruction if they are held accountable for the knowledge their students show on a standardized test and if their jobs depend on the students' performance on these tests. This is the "fire your way to excellence" approach promoted by economist Erik Hanushek and uber-reformer Michelle Rhee.

Rewards come in the form of merit pay. Again borrowing from that almighty business model that has stood the country in such good stead in the last decade (recession, housing crisis, "too big to fail") education reformers have determined that teachers will perform better if they get monetary rewards when their students do well - again as measured by standardized tests. Never mind that merit pay has never worked in schools. Never mind that study after study has shown that value added measures (VAMs) of teacher effectiveness are fatally flawed. Never mind even that many forward looking businesses have recognized that collaboration, not competition, makes for an effective company. Never mind all of this. Education reformers cling to the idea of teacher improvement through merit pay.

Maybe, just maybe, if the education reformers could park their ideology for a while and roam the halls of schools and watch and listen to teachers, they might learn something about what motivates teachers. If they did this for a week, they would find they were on the wrong track.

Here is what I have discovered motivates teachers to excel in my 45 years of wandering those school hallways. If we really want to improve teaching and learning and if our real agenda is improving teacher motivation, here are some good places to start.

### Teachers are motivated by students

Nothing can motivate a teacher to be well-prepared and perform at peak ability more than the simple fact their will be 25 or so faces looking at you in the morning, waiting for you to teach them. When students have a moment of insight, teachers feel empowered. When a student is struggling to understand, the teacher is motivated to find a way to get through.

I worked with struggling readers. Progress was often slow and laborious, but when a struggling student learned a new strategy or read a passage that would have been too difficult the week before, the feeling of empowerment and motivation was

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**“What Motivates Teachers?”**

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incredible. I wanted to find more answers; I wanted to continue the teaching. At the end of the year, I always got enough thanks or smiles to keep me motivated for the next year.

How can that motivation be measured by a VAM? How do you put a price on it?

**Teachers are motivated by teaching**

Teaching is intrinsically rewarding. For those of us who chose to go into the profession, teaching is fun. It is energizing. I have had many times in my life when I didn't feel particularly well or when I was tired and then I began to teach and I felt better, more energized. I can teach myself awake and I have seen many other teachers who do the same thing.

Teaching is a rewarding profession. Most teachers went into the profession to touch the lives of children. Teaching gives the socially conscious individual daily feedback that they are making a difference in the world and shaping the future.

**Teachers are motivated by good working conditions**

While a reasonable living wage is certainly important to every teacher, in my experience in hiring teachers, I have found them to be more interested in the working conditions they will find in the school where they will work. What working conditions matter? Reasonable class sizes. Adequate resources to do the job. Adequate planning time. A clean building in good repair. Supportive administrators. Supportive and engaged parents. Friendly and supportive colleagues.

When I interviewed candidates for a teaching position, I found the very best candidates were also interviewing me. What was their number one concern? Working conditions. Teachers are motivated to work hard and well in a school that provides them with a pleasant and productive working environment.

When I was president of my local teaching association, most of the concerns that came to me had to do with working conditions, not salary or disciplinary issues.

Education reformers would be better off spending their money to control class size and repair dilapidated buildings as a way to motivate teachers, rather than spending untold millions on standardized tests and discredited measures of teacher effectiveness.

**Teachers are motivated by autonomy**

Daniel Pink, in his book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, identifies autonomy as a major motivating factor. Teachers need the license to respond to the teaching situation in front of them. While good teaching is guided by good curriculum, and yes, even good standards, good teaching demands that a variety of instructional choices be made by the teacher, sometimes on the fly, often after reflection. Teaching and learning is a dynamic that cannot be driven by rigid curriculum demands.

Teachers will be motivated when they have the freedom to improvise within the confines of a curriculum in order to best meet the needs of the students sitting in front of them at that moment in time. It is the essence of professionalism to not just be allowed to use your professional judgement, but to be expected to use that judgement and to be valued because you can and do use that judgement.

**Teachers are motivated by actionable feedback**

Bill Gates loves to say that teachers want and need feedback. He is right about that. He is also very wrong about the kind of feedback that motivates teachers. Feedback from standardized tests will not motivate teachers. It is too distant from the actual learning situation; it is not timely (often this feedback comes after the school year is over) and it is not clear what actions a teacher could take that would improve student performance on this learning abstraction.

Teachers get actionable feedback everyday. They get this feedback by watching students in the act of learning. Teachers know who has understood the concept and who has failed to understand the concept by watching students. For more formal feedback, the teacher designs a criterion referenced test to see who has grasped the concepts and who has not and then adjusts instruction accordingly.

I have found teachers are also open to actionable feedback when it is offered by supervisors in an observation setting. It is important that there be a level of trust between teacher and supervisor for the feedback to be accepted. It is also important that the supervisor provides feedback that is useful and doable.

When the feedback is far removed from the learning environment, as is the case with standardized tests, there can be little motivation for the teacher to use the information. When the results of the standardized tests are also being used to hold the teacher accountable, we can expect either resistance from the teacher or narrowing of instruction to focus on what is rewarded on the test.

**Teachers are motivated by their colleagues**

Every school is, of course, a little society. If the school is a healthy society, teachers will work well together for the benefit of the children. Experienced teachers will help new teachers; teachers who share a struggling student will work together to find ways to help the child learn; teachers will borrow good instructional ideas from each other. In many schools this professional collegial interaction is formalized in professional learning communities, where teachers together tackle knotty instructional problems.

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# Maine School Superintendents Association June 25, 2014

## Recognition Banquet at the 103rd Annual Commissioner's Conference

### Retirements

Franklin McElwain  
Patrick R. Phillips  
Barbara S. Powers  
Allan G. Snell  
Brenda Joy Stevens  
Robert E. Wall  
Shannon L. Welsh  
Sara L. Zito

### Longevity Awards

#### 15 Years

Patricia A. Duran  
David A. Walker

#### 20 Years

Roger S. Shaw

#### 25 Years

Dean P. Baker  
Allan G. Snell

#### 30 Years

Doug Smith  
N. Kenneth Smith

#### 35 Years

Gehrig T. Johnson

### 2014 Outstanding Leadership Awards

Brent Colbry  
Michael Hammer  
David W. Murphy  
Allan G. Snell

### 2014 Distinguished Service Award

Harry R. Pringle, Esq., Drummond Woodsum

### 2014 President's Award

David W. Murphy

### 2014 Commissioner's Award

Robert G. Hasson, Jr.



2014 Commissioner's Award recipient Bob Hasson, MSSA Executive Director, pictured with Education Commissioner Jim Rier



Pictured left: Brothers Ken and Doug Smith, Longevity Award recipients with over 60 years of combined service as Superintendents.



2014 President's Award recipient David Murphy with incoming MSSA President Suzanne Godin and Education Commissioner Jim Rier

## Mark Your Calendar



- ⇒ **July 14-18**      **Child Sexual Abuse Symposium for Educators**  
Saint Joseph's College [Online.sjcme.edu/edsymposium](http://Online.sjcme.edu/edsymposium)
- ⇒ **July 14-Aug 1**      **NEH Summer Institute**  
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse [www.uwlax.edu/mvas/neh.htm](http://www.uwlax.edu/mvas/neh.htm)
- ⇒ **July 24-25**      **AASA Collaborative Inaugural Conference**  
<http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=33684>
- ⇒ **August 1**      **2015 AASA National Superintendent of the Year Nomination Deadline**  
[Nomination Information & Procedures](#)
- ⇒ **September 9**      **\*Save the Date\* Training for Leadership** for School Board Chairs & Superintendents  
Hampden Academy, Hampden, ME, 5 p.m.-8 p.m., dinner included  
Facilitator: Ed Massey, Past President, NSBA
- ⇒ **September 10**      **\*Save the Date\* Training for Leadership** for School Board Chairs & Superintendents  
South Portland, ME, 5 p.m.-8 p.m., dinner included  
Facilitator: Ed Massey, Past President, NSBA
- ⇒ **September 18**      **\*Save the Date\* MSMA School Security Conference \*FREE\***  
Hampden Academy, Hampden, ME, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
- ⇒ **September 19**      **\*Save the Date\* MSMA School Security Conference \*FREE\***  
Westbrook Middle School, Westbrook, ME 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
- ⇒ **September 25**      **Evaluation That Works: Implementing Your New Educator Effectiveness System**  
Drummond Woodsum Workshop presented in partnership with MSMA  
Augusta Civic Center, 8:45 a.m.-11:55 a.m.  
Register online at [www.schoollaw.com](http://www.schoollaw.com) or complete the [registration form](#) and mail it in.
- ⇒ **October 2-3**      **AASA Women in School Leadership**  
Rohnert Park, CA [Download the registration form \(pdf\)](#)
- ⇒ **October 22**      **MSSA Annual Fall Meeting**  
Augusta Civic Center
- ⇒ **October 23-24**      **MSMA 41st Annual Fall Conference**  
Augusta Civic Center

## Professional Vacancies

School Unit	Date Available	Application Deadline	For More Information Contact
<b>Academic Dean</b> Maine School of Science and Mathematics Limestone, Maine	When suitable candidate found	Open	Please email to <a href="mailto:mssm@mssm.org">mssm@mssm.org</a> a letter of interest, resume and transcripts, as well as: <a href="#">a completed application for employment</a>
<b>Principal</b> RSU #13 Oceanside High School East Rockland, Maine	When suitable candidate found	Open	Individuals interested should submit an <a href="#">Administrative Position Application</a> and required documents to: Michael Wilhelm, Interim Superintendent RSU #13 28 Lincoln Street, Rockland ME 04841 email: <a href="mailto:employment@rsu13.org">employment@rsu13.org</a>

### **“What Motivates Teachers?”**

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Interestingly, there is every reason to believe that reformy schemes like merit pay will undermine the collegial nature of schools. In merit pay there will be winners and losers. If teachers are competing for a pot of gold at the end of the standardized testing rainbow, they are not likely to be willing to share with colleagues. It is reasonable to project that merit pay will create a toxic school environment where teachers close their doors to their colleagues and hoard their good instructional ideas.

#### **Teachers are motivated by relevant professional development**

Like their students, good teachers are always learning. Professional development that is relevant and that teachers can see will have a positive impact on their students' learning is motivating for teachers. While teachers are often known to gripe about professional development that is not relevant, or time wasting, when teachers are involved in the design of the professional development, their buy in and motivation are increased.

So there you go education reformers. If you are serious about improving teaching, find a way to use your vast resources to improve teacher working conditions, collegiality and autonomy. Motivating teachers is complex, challenging and ultimately very doable. What you will get with accountability by test scores and merit pay is at best a compliance that works against your goals and at worst open rebellion against all that you stand for. Better yet, just get out of the way and let the professionals get to work. I assure you they are well-motivated to do so.

-Russ Walsh, adjunct professor at Rider and St. Joseph's Universities, from his blog [Russ on Reading](#)



**If you have questions about any articles in this newsletter or suggestion for improving this publication, please let us know.**

**You can contact me, MSSA Executive Director Robert Hasson at [rhasson@msmaweb.com](mailto:rhasson@msmaweb.com).**