



# Executive Director's Update

Massachusetts School Administrators' Association

33 Forge Parkway | Franklin, MA 02038 | 508-541-7997 | msaa.net

**From Executive Director Robert Baldwin**

Massachusetts School Administrators' Association

**October 15, 2025**

## A message from MSAA Vice President and MSAA Executive Director

Dear Massachusetts School Administrators' Association,

October is National Principals Month, and we recognize that in 2025, we are not simply leaders, we are strategists in our efforts to improve student attendance, parent engagement and in the development of high quality instructional strategies that bolster student achievement that has been lagging following the multi-leveled impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our students.

With your valued input and collaboration, we are reassembling our subcommittees to provide professional development opportunities for educators in the following areas: Elementary, Urban, Rural, Middle, High, Assistant Principals and Special Education.

As the Co Chair of the Sub Committee on Special Education, I am so excited to explore ways in which we can provide educators with opportunities to improve inclusion for students by strengthening our co-teaching practices.

In my twenty years of membership, MSAA has never been so forward-thinking, thoughtful and inclusive in canvassing talent throughout the Commonwealth to bring us together to strengthen our schools.

We Appreciate You!

Sincerely,

Mary K. DeCoursey, *President Elect, MSAA*

Dr. Robert Baldwin, *Executive Director, MSAA*

**OCTOBER IS  
NATIONAL  
PRINCIPALS  
MONTH!**

#ThankAPrincipal



In our enthusiastic effort to expand our leadership base, the Massachusetts School Administrators' Association has launched an initiative to include Special Needs Educators as part of the MSAA. In response to our membership's request for more training, more inclusive collegiality, and a voice at the decision-making table, the MSAA is proud to announce the following has come from our first state-wide committee meeting.

**Join today and receive THREE FREE PD Opportunities for Special Needs Educators**



### The Legal Aspects of Special Education

Attorney Catherine Lyons will lead a vital professional development session using a popular case study style to help all special needs educators—from veterans to

newcomers—navigate the ever-changing landscape of federal and state special education laws, guidelines, and best practices.



**November 17, 2025 ~ 8:30-11:30am**

### Behavioral Blindspots: Overlooked Strategies to Effectively Support Students with Social Emotional Challenges



Jessica Minahan, Ph.D. an internationally recognized BCBA and special needs educator, specializes in training school staff to create behavior intervention plans that effectively combine behavioral strategies with best practices for students with complex mental health profiles, anxiety, trauma histories, and challenging behaviors.

**February 26, 2026 ~ 8:30-11:30am**



### Challenges and Celebrations of Practices

Leveraging the vast, multi-level experience of retired Special Education Director Kim Woodford, this interactive and relaxed session invites Team Chairs, Coordinators, and Teachers to share ideas, problem-solve common challenges, and learn from field practitioners through specific case studies and current school/district challenges.



**January 15, 2026 ~ 8:30-11:30am**



MSAA Office, Franklin, MA



Free with new 2025-2026 Membership  
Non-Members: \$205 (per workshop)



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## Tap on the Shoulder Initiative

The Tap on the Shoulder initiative invites school leaders to recognize and support aspiring administrators who demonstrate leadership potential. The information below outlines the purpose of the initiative. Please scan the QR code to share contact information for an aspiring leader who is ready to take the next step in their professional journey. By giving a "Tap on the Shoulder," you help strengthen the future of educational leadership across Massachusetts.

## Administrators Coaching and Mentoring Program

We are thrilled to offer 35 trained and experienced Coaches who are available to support new administrators as they navigate their leadership roles. Our coaches bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to help guide and empower school leaders in creating positive change. This year, we've set a goal of recruiting 75 new leaders into our coaching program. As of now, we have 26 new leaders enrolled - that's 49 more to go! We need your help to reach this milestone. Could you please refer at least one new leader (Principal, Assistant Principal or Central Office Leader) by sending their name, email, and telephone number to Yolanda at [yburnett@msaa.net](mailto:yburnett@msaa.net).

Together, we can ensure that more school leaders benefit from the support and guidance of the MSAA Coaching Program. Check out the details of our Coaching Program through the following links: [Outline](#); [Request a Coach](#); or view our [Coaching Directory](#). Whether you're a new administrator or know someone who could benefit, this program is designed to provide tailored guidance and practical solutions. Explore the program and take advantage of this valuable resource!

## LLP 2026-2027 Cohort

We are so pleased to announce that the 2026-2027 LLP Cohort is accepting applications. As many of you know our program combines hands on experiences in schools through the practicum as well as coupling that experience with practical and meaningful instruction. Please find below a more detailed description of LLP.

The Massachusetts School Administrators' Association (MSAA) Leadership Licensure Program (LLP) is a rigorous and comprehensive program designed to support aspiring PK-12 educational leaders across the Commonwealth. This program goes beyond simply fulfilling licensure requirements, aiming to build a significant and lasting Personal Learning Network (PLN) for its candidates. Through a blend of robust instruction, collaborative learning, and practical, performance-based assessments, LLP offers extensive professional learning opportunities. Our faculty consists of Superintendents, Principals and Special Education Directors. Its curriculum is grounded in effective teaching practices, instructional leadership, and Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices, with the ultimate goal of cultivating transformative, equity-driven leaders.

Participants will engage with the Massachusetts Administrative Leader Guidelines and relevant curriculum frameworks, preparing them to lead with impact in public schools. The program's unique integrated approach, which includes a focus on DESE's Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL) Tasks woven into each module, ensures candidates are well-prepared to meet the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Professional Standards and Indicators for Administrators.

So, tap the shoulder of the teacher, counselor in your district or school who just has "it".



## TAP ON THE SHOULDER INITIATIVE

### 01 TAP ON THE SHOULDER



MSAA believes a strong pipeline of well-prepared and supported school leaders is essential for all students to thrive. The initiative intends for current aspiring leaders to identify someone who has the "It" factor. Once identified, MSAA will conduct workshops with the goal of helping these leaders receive a "Tap on the Shoulder" and secure a second contract.

### BECOME AN ASPIRING LEADER 02

The new Aspiring Principal Membership provides access to basic services:

- Monthly Executive Director's Update
- Discount on Professional Services
- Support in the job search process
- and model contract support services
- Opportunities to connect with colleagues to create a sense of belonging



### 03 LEARN ABOUT MSAA



Join us for the MSAA Informational Panel on December 1<sup>st</sup> in Franklin. This is a great opportunity to connect with colleagues and learn about the MSAA.

### ATTEND THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL MEETING 04

We invite you to attend our professional development event on Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. This event is focused on key areas critical for effective school leadership:

- Instructional Leadership
- Safe Learning Environments
- Educational Technology
- Essential Leadership Skills (e.g., vulnerability and team-building)



Join us to network with peers, learn from keynote speakers, gain practical strategies for immediate school improvement, and take a significant step in your preparation for future leadership roles, such as becoming a Principal.





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### 25-26 MSAA Membership Registrations

With a strong focus on Principals, we are hoping that you will encourage your Assistant Principals to join this great organization. Whether it be discounted Professional Development, a voice on state and national committees, access to a confidential support hotline, or simply collaboration and a network with other school leaders your Association is a great source of support for you. **Also, please remember, membership dues are covered in most contracts and paid for by many districts.** [Click here](#) for more information.

### Professional Development Workshops for SY25-26!

We are excited to announce the offerings for the SY25-26 [Professional Development Workshops](#)! These workshops are designed to support educators, school leaders, and staff in enhancing their skills and practices. Please share these opportunities with your school community, network, and colleagues. It's a great chance to learn, grow, and collaborate with professionals across the state. Together, we can foster professional growth and continue making an impact on our schools!

### In-Person PD Workshops

- **Components of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, the Role of the S.S.T (Student Success Team) and the Effective Use of the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP): How Do These Three Structures Impact Inclusive Teaching and Learning?** - *Dr. Curtis A. Bates* (October 16, 8:30 AM-3:00 PM)
- **Fostering a Culture that Includes ALL Students in an Inclusionary, Diverse and Equitable Setting through Co-Teaching: What are the Necessary Components to be Successful?** - *Shannon Pirrello* (October 23, 8:30-11:30 AM Session)
- **How Do We Ensure that Specially Designed Instruction is Being Honored in the Co-Taught Classroom?** - *Shannon Pirrello* (October 23, 12:30-3:30 PM)
- **A Toolkit for New School Leaders** - *Dr. William Whalen* (October 28, 8:30-11:30 AM)
- **What to Do About Students who Drink Alcohol, Use Marijuana, Ingest Edible Cannabis, Vape and/or Exhibit Negative Social Behaviors in Middle Schools and High Schools!** - *Thomas L. Brow, Jr.* (October 30, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM)

### Student Activities (Student Council, National Honor Society, Cheer, Dance, Game Day and Esports)

[Click here](#) to register Student Activities

[Click here](#) to provide Student Activities staff information

### Esports

Esports continue to grow in our MSAA high schools. The best way to get started is to pass along the flyer linked below to a staff member, often times a teacher, to help start an esports club and eventual team. Please pass along and see what your school can offer to excited and motivated esports students!

[Esports Flyer](#)

### Confidential Hotline

The Confidential Support Hotline continues to be a service for all members to get advice and support to challenging questions. [This link](#) allows you to see the specifics of this new and confidential service. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

### Calendar

- October 22 – Assistant Principals Committee
- October 23 – SPED Committee Meeting (Virtual)
- October 27 – MSAA Board of Directors (Virtual)
- October 25 – MASC Officershop
- November 5 – Elementary Committee (Virtual)
- November 10 – NHS Fall Conference
- November 15 – MASC

### Massachusetts Labor Law Workshop

MSAA will have Attorney Sheilah McCarthy available to help you with tips on negotiating and understanding your contract agreement. Sheilah is a labor and employment lawyer who represents unions and individual employees in the negotiating of their employment contracts and severance packages. This is a free workshop on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 12:30pm at the MSAA office in Franklin. [Click here](#) for more information and to RSVP.

### MASC Officershop

This conference will be packed with informational and practical workshops. A variety of interactive training opportunities will be provided for Student Council Officers, Members and Advisors. Schools are encouraged to register Student Council Officers, Class Officers and aspiring future leaders. [Click here](#) to register – registration deadline is Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>.

### MSAA/NHS Annual Fall Conference

Monday, November 10 at MSAA Office, Franklin.

Keynote Speaker Anthony Valentine

[Click here](#) to register.

### Thanks for your continued support!

Robert Baldwin

**Helping educators succeed in and out of the classroom**

Better benefits. Stronger schools. Happier educators.

Horace Mann

Contact us to see how our products and programs can benefit your staff and help you attract and retain top talent.

