



News

Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs Newsletter

Welcome to the Winter 2016 MAAP newsletter. There are updates here on our annual conference, and recent MAAP STARS activity. Also check out the latest updates on our website at [MAAP Website](#). We hope you have a happy Holiday season!

President's Message

By Cliff Skagen

Happy holidays!

Finally snow has made it to most corners of the state. Does it stay on the ground, well that's another subject.

During this time of year it is so exciting to see so many of our students getting ready for the Holidays. Whether it is putting up a Christmas tree, celebrating Hanukkah, Mawlid, or preparing for Kwanzaa it can be great for our students to connect with family and friends.

On the other hand, we have a few students where it takes the village (it may be just that one person), to find a highlight or a safe place for that child. These moments of connection with a student may provide a key moment of happiness to that child. If not happiness, then at least a sense of calm and safety.

That village is often within your schools. Members of that village can include teachers, support staff, custodians and staff in all your departments. I just want to acknowledge and thank all of the staff in your buildings for the work they do. The work that goes on no matter what, and for the work goes unseen. For the work that is not recognized by the child until many years later, this is the awe inspiring work that makes me

love my job.

Thanks again for all that you do.

Have a safe and happy Holiday season!

Preparing for Our 34th Annual Conference

By Chris Bodick

The Conference Planning Committee met again the last week of November to continue planning and preparing for the upcoming 2017 MAAP State Conference on February 8th, 9th, and 10th in Mankato. At that time there were about half of the presenters needed to round out the conference. We are still in need of presenters who are willing to share what they are doing in their schools to enable students to experience success and growth. As the presenters are registering we are creating the frameworks and schedule for the conference. This will be ready to go to the printers at the beginning of January, and available at that time on the MAAP website, www.maapmn.org.

Many thanks to the presenters who have already submitted their proposals. Please continue to consider being a presenter and prompt your colleagues to consider presenting at this year's conference. Become part of the MAAP mission to lead, promote, and support innovative learning experiences for all

Minnesota students.

If you have any questions about the conference, please contact me. cbodick@riverbend.k12.mn.us
507-359-8763

See you at the Conference!

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More Conference Information!

By Steve Allen

This is our 34th Annual State Conference! Years ago, there used to be a conference held that was called “Practitioner’s Paradise”. Well, I would proudly say that MAAP’s Annual Conference is the longest standing “Practitioner’s Paradise” in Minnesota! I often proudly say, “Practitioner’s make the best presenters”! Every year, I am impressed with the army of practitioners who come to our conference and share their high level of expertise. Without you, the past 34 years would have never happened. This all started many years ago when a few alternative educators got together and someone said, “Wouldn’t it be great if we could get our teachers and staff together to share and learn from each other?” Well, after all these years and thousands of participants later, the MAAP Annual State Conference goes on. It truly is the best and our legacy continues.

Here’s a few bits of information about this year’s conference:

- What does this year’s theme mean to you?
No Risk, No Reward!
Reaching and Teaching At-Risk Youth
- To me, it means as alternative educators, we continue to take risks. We take risks on the kids that we believe in. We take risks in the schools that we work in. Without you taking these risks, there would be no rewards. There would be no graduation for many students. There would be no human transformations that go on in your schools every day. Educators touch students through relationships, relationships that open

- up learning and educational opportunities. Be proud of what you do!
- Do you know that this is the first time that we have taken our Annual State Conference to the City of Mankato? Do you know that our venue, the Verizon Wireless Center has just completed a major renovation? Do you know that the Mankato Wilson Campus School in the 1960’s was called the “most innovative school in America” by national press?
- The Verizon Wireless Center provides us with a lot of new innovative opportunities this year. We are going to have opportunities for:
 - » large sessions for keynote presentations;
 - » mid-size sessions that tend to draw a crowds;
 - » regular size concurrent breakout sessions;
 - » personal “skinny” sessions;
 - » vendor sessions;
 - » panel sessions
 - » active and engaging sessions;
 - » and even site visits to a couple of great schools (Mankato Central High School and Minnesota New Country School).
- MAAP has a long standing history of having great keynote presenters come to our conferences. Can you name some of the great keynote speakers who we have had at our conference in recent years? Check out this impressive list of past keynote presenters:
 - » Alfie Kohn (3 times) Massachusetts
 - » Chanda Baker Minnesota
 - » Angela Valenzuela Texas
 - » Bill Ayers Illinois

- » Deborah Meier Massachusetts
- » John Taylor Gatto New York
- » Don Glines California
- » Marion Brady Washington DC
- » Pasi Sahlberg Finland
- » Mercedes Schneider Louisiana
- » Mark Yudof Minnesota
- » Bob Barr Idaho
- » Kimberly Marcinek Texas
- » Susan Ohanian (2 times) Vermont
- » Lynn Stoddard Utah
- » David Berliner Arizona
- » Erica Goldson New York
- » Bill Cala New York
- » Mary K. Boyd Minnesota
- » Ananth Pai Minnesota
- Add to this list, our three keynote speakers that we have lined up for this year (see articles below): Yong Zhao, Craig Boykin and Patty Wetterling!



Who is Dr. Yong Zhao?

By Bill Zimmewicz

Dr. Yong Zhao is a distinguished educator. He is the author of over 100 articles and 30 books, including: Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon: Why China

had the Best (and Worst) Education system in the World. He most recently authored *Counting What Counts: Reframing Education Outcomes*. Currently, since August of 2016, Dr. Zhao is a Foundation Distinguished Professor in the School of Education at the University of Kansas. He is a recipient of the Early Career Award from the American Educational Research Association.

Dr. Zhao, born and raised in China, received his B.A. in English Language Education from Sichuan Institute of Foreign Languages in Chongqing, China in 1986. Later, after teaching English language in China, Dr. Zhao attended the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. There, he received his A.M. in 1994 and his PhD in 1996.

Dr. Zhao has spent his career challenging conventional and traditional education practices and pedagogies. He has rallied against the privatization of public education. He has also been critical of the testing movement and the Common Core standards. Instead, Dr. Zhao feels that education should focus on developing learners' creativity. His book, *World Class Learners*, makes the case that students need to become entrepreneurs—creators and innovators. This is what American education (actually, education everywhere) should aim for. His most recent work is *Counting What Counts: Reframing Education Outcomes* (2016). Perhaps his most popular book is *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon: Why China has the Best (and Worst) Education System in the World* (2014).

MAAP is very fortunate to have Yong Zhao as their guest and keynote speaker for the 2017 state conference. He adds to our list of very distinguished and accomplished educational thinkers and activists.



Meet Craig Boykin By Cliff Skagen

Craig Boykin presents *From GED to Ph.D.*

"If you think education is boring, try sitting in the food stamp office all day!"
-Craig Boykin

I was sitting in a crowd of educators a couple years ago when a speaker, Craig Boykin, began telling a story about changing dysfunction and deficits into triumph. To say I was moved by his humility and passion is an understatement.

I am thrilled that Craig has agreed to be the keynote speaker at the MAAP Winter Conference. Craig won me over again by his passion and dedication to change people's lives and help educators grow.

Craig works with educators to help them find innovative ways to teach and understand some of the most troubled children. One of my favorite quotes of his is, "At-Risk Youth don't care about your curriculum and lesson plans, until you start caring about their circumstances."

Craig travels the country presenting his seminars and workshops. He has published five books since 2013 and has been featured on talk shows, won awards, and his story has been shared in many inspirational magazines and

across the web. *My Life, Your Inspiration* is a great read and is an autobiography about the difficulties and setbacks that he faced and turned them into opportunities.

Craig will also have two breakout sessions at this year's conference for follow-up questions and research-based strategies for helping our students. Mark your calendars for the MAAP's 34th Annual Winter Conference on February 8-10 at the Verizon Wireless Center in Mankato.



Meet Patty Wetterling By Kristyn Martin

Did you know Patty Wetterling received her B.S. degree from Mankato State University...majoring in Math and Psychology? She also has 5 years of experience teaching secondary math in Maryland and Iowa.

Patty was selected by the Minneapolis Star Tribune as one of the "100 Most Influential Minnesotans of the Century" and recently received the Governor's "Leadership Award for Unique Acts of Kindness." She has received a variety of awards including "Eleven Who Care" sponsored by the NBC affiliate, KARE 11-TV in Minneapolis. In addition, she has received sever-

al honors from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children including "10th Anniversary Award", "The Rainbow Award" and "The Vision Award".

Patty was instrumental in the passage of the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children Sex Offender Registration Act on the state level as well as part of the 1994 Federal Crime Bill. She was instrumental in establishing the state-wide AMBER Plan in Minnesota and was a keynote speaker for the very first AMBER Plan training in Dallas, Texas. Patty has presented at four Missing Children's Day Ceremonies in Washington DC with John Walsh and Attorneys General Janet Reno, John Ashcroft, Eric Holder, and Loretta Lynch. Patty served on a panel at the very first White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children in October 2002, sponsored by President George and First Lady Laura Bush. She will be joining us in Mankato on Friday, February 10th to spread her message that all children deserve to grow up in a safe environment, and pursue their dreams.



Conference Networking Extravaganza

By Kristyn Martin

You betcha...we are planning another networking get together from 7:30 - 9:30 PM on Thursday February 9th during the MAAP Conference in Mankato. For those who are new to the

Networking Extravaganza experience, you can expect fun drawings, prizes, snacks, adult beverages, wacky picture opportunities (photo booth maybe?) and an opportunity to meet, or join in on conversations with educators from across the state of Minnesota. It's a great time, and we are having it at the historic BANK located within the Verizon Wireless Center. This one will be way too much fun to miss, so we hope to see everyone there.

Grand Prize drawing will be a GOPRO camera. How do you win this? Look for the 5-7 question scavenger hunt in your registration materials, answer the questions and turn it in at the Networking Extravaganza. Your completed scavenger hunt turns in to your grand prize raffle ticket. It's a GREAT prize for minimal effort. The count-down has begun, we will see you in Mankato.



Conference Coupons for Mankato (Dinner/Entertainment)

By Kristyn Martin

Be on the lookout at the registration table for coupons to the local establishments for dinner and/or entertainment. MAAP members will have numerous options to choose from for dinner on Wednesday night, "staff bonding" on Thursday evening, or to grab a cup of coffee somewhere. So, members of the Conference Planning Committee will be meeting with the owners of the local establishments who are part of Enter-

tainment Alley (right next to the hotel's/Verizon Center). More information to come. If you'd like to keep up-to-date with new information, like us on Facebook and we will keep you informed. See you all soon!



Vendors, Exhibitors

By Deanna Chiodo

Our state conference is fast approaching and we are in need of vendors. The more vendors we have the more beneficial it is to our members. Please consider reaching out to vendors for us. If you can't contact them yourself, please provide their contact information to me, Deanna Chiodo, the Vendor/Exhibitor Chair at deanna.chiodo@isd728.org.

We are going to be located in the recently remodeled Verizon Center (a great new venue for our organization!) and will once again attempt to locate our exhibitors and vendors in high traffic areas and to provide some food in the area, as well. Some exhibitors and vendors have requested more opportunities for advertisement and breakout session presentations. You will see below some of the new opportunities that we have made available to vendors this year:

Exhibitor / Vendor Options

- » **Option number 1:**
Regular Vendor / Exhibitor includes booth and table, cost \$300 f or profit and \$150.00 for

- nonprofit.
- » **Option number 2:** Bronze Vendor / Exhibitor includes booth and table and 1/2 page insert in conference materials, cost \$400 for profit and \$250 for nonprofit.
 - » **Option number 3:** Silver Vendor / Exhibitor includes booth and table, full page insert in conference materials and digital advertisement, cost \$500 for profit and \$350 for nonprofit.
 - » **Option number 4:** Gold Vendor / Exhibitor includes booth and table, full page insert in conference materials, digital advertisement and Vendor / Exhibitor breakout session, cost \$750 for profit and \$500 for nonprofit.
 - » **Option number 5:** The Olympic Decathlon includes booth and table, full page insert in conference materials, digital advertisement, Vendor / Exhibitor breakout session and digital sponsorship of keynote speaker cost \$1500 for profit and \$1000 for nonprofit.

Regional Tables

By Peter Lundin

Something new in Mankato! Every year, people walk away from the annual MAAP conference talking about the power of networking. Tools, strategies, and concepts being shared at MAAP expand and support local programming and strengthen our impact on students, families, and staff. Where is there a program that has dealt with, imple-

mented, tried out certain tools, strategies, or concepts. This year MAAP will make this even easier! Each region in the state will have a table near registration where individual programs can promote their school. The intention is to share with the world what you do so that others know, "who does what."

Here's what you need:

- Brochures
 - Video, pictures, tri-folds
 - Program concepts
 - Banners
 - Any idea or option to show people what makes your school great!
- Questions? You are welcome to call me (218-844-5687), email plundin@detlakes.k12.mn.us or speak with your Regional Director. See you in February!

Legislation for 2017

By Wayne Jennings

Your active legislative committee of about 12 members met for the 4th time to prepare our MAAP Legislative Platform for approval by the Board of Directors at their January meeting. Steve Allen and Renee Parcheta met with Eugene Piccolo, executive director of the MN Assoc. of Charter Schools for support and clarification on legislative platforms. It was agreed to separate issues unique to each organization and to be supportive of mutually beneficial items.

The legislative committee recommends limiting our organization's planks to a brief priority list rather than to list all our needs and swamping legislators. Here are key areas and committee members who researched the item:

1. Homeless students. Lea Dahl and Brandon Wait. This growing number of students outstrips school resources and transportation services. It requires critical additional resources. It is rec-

ommended that the Minnesota legislature provide supplemental financial assistance for the full implementation of Federal legislation for serving homeless students. The number of homeless students is growing exponentially and is becoming a major concern in schools. There is an immediate need to implement support and/or mental health services and the need for implementation and/or enforcement of current Federal legislation (McKinney-Vento Act); particularly in the area of coming into compliance with Federal legislation and transportation costs for homeless students

2. Extended time revenue. Tony Scallon and Jon Peterson. It is recommended that the multiplier for calculating extended time revenue to be restored to the equal of the base formula is each fiscal year. The purpose of making this request is to provide ALC eligible students greater time and access to the supports needed to get them back on track toward graduation per MN Statute 124D.68. The current multiplier is less than the base formula and the lack of adjustment to the increasing costs of serving ALC eligible students, is severely limiting ALC's and ALP's, across the state of MN, in their capacity to adequately meet the needs of our most at-risk youth.

3. Recovery schools. Peter Lundin and Traci Bowermaster. It is recommended that funding be reauthorized for the preservation of Minnesota's six Sober/ Recovery Schools and to fund expansion of the number of Sober/Recovery services and Schools including Chemical Health services.

These three areas were selected as critical. Two of them should appeal emotionally, particularly if we have students testify. We all need to let legislators know of these areas for assistance. We will need sponsors of legislation and the

specific bill language.

The legislative committee examined other areas of concern beyond these three. They will remain on an alternate list for action as opportunities present themselves.

Alternative Assessments: David Bly and Wayne Jennings. We seem to be past the era of closing schools with low test scores. Still, relying on standardized tests and on-time graduation for judging students and programs misses documenting individual growth of students who are under-credited and over-age. Representative Bly has been pursuing this issue during several legislative sessions.

Interdisciplinary license: Steve Allen and Wayne Jennings. We have taken up this issue with the Board of Teaching for about 10 years. Only in the last two years has the director and board shown enthusiasm. However, the Board of Teaching has been the subject of review and criticism. Consequently, we may have to wait for a more opportune time.

Early/Middle College. Kristy Snyder. These are growing national programs and we have several in Minnesota. These programs combine upper levels of high school and college to a greater degree than postsecondary enrollment options and accelerate attainment of college degrees.

Algebra. Wayne Jennings. We want to eliminate algebra as a requirement for graduation. Yes, to arithmetic, fractions, decimals, estimating and understanding large numbers. No to algebra and higher algebra as a requirement for graduation.

Other. Raising the graduation age from 21 to 22 to capture older students who didn't graduate.

As always, call your representative and

senator to tell them about your program's existence and purpose. Invite them to visit. It makes a big difference in our proposals before the Legislature. The Legislature meets January 3rd, 2017.

MDE Update By Mary Barrie

During the 2016 Legislative Session, Governor Mark Dayton and Lt. Governor Tina Smith worked with the Minnesota Legislature to secure a \$12 million investment for school support staff. Districts and Charter Schools submitted applications for support positions such as school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, chemical dependency counselors, and school nurses for the next six years. The additional counselors and other support staff will begin to alleviate Minnesota's shortage of student support personnel.

The \$12 million investment will be distributed as grants to 37 school districts and charter schools, funding 40 school counselors, 21 school social workers, 7 chemical dependency counselors, 6 school psychologists, and 3 school nurses. There were 8 SAAPS in this group and 4 charter schools.

There is a grant opportunity for any school that has a CTE program. This is called the Certification Incentive Revenue. There is a list of qualifying career and technical education certificates in fields where occupational opportunities exist. Reimbursement funds are available for the cost of students in grades 9 through 12 who complete a certificate. The certificates may be completed as part of a regularly scheduled course. If you think this is something you may be able to access please contact Michelle Kamenov, Supervisor, Career and Technical Education, Office of Career and College Success: 651-582-8434, or contact Michael Mitchell, Education

Specialist, Office of Career and College Success: 651-582-8513.

We are holding another workshop On December 9 for folks interested in Early Middle College. We are currently full but contact me if you are interested and I will see if we have had any cancellations. It will be held at North Hennepin Technical College. We are looking forward to the MAAP conference in February!

Stay warm and see you in Mankato.



MAAP STARS Fall Leadership Conference 2016 Summary By Patti Haasch

MAAP STARS held its 23rd Annual Fall Leadership Conference November 9 & 10 at Camp Ripley. There were 200 people from 26 different programs around the State. You can see the many smiling faces in their brightly colored MAAP STARS t-shirts in the Animoto video posted on the MAAP web site. The conference was lead by Jordan Ausland, 2015-16 MAAP STARS Officer, graduate of Pillager Area Charter School, who is now attending St. Cloud State University. Matt Hoepfer is a former MAAP STARS participant that graduated from Fergus Falls ALC. Matt spoke to the group about his experiences and encourage students to make the most of the opportunities they can get from being in MAAP STARS.

Elections were held for SY '16-17 Officers. There were 13 candidates and 6 were chosen: Jeffery Carter (Anoka-Hennepin Regional High School), Peyton Dean (Voyageurs Expeditionary High School), Carl Fisher (Paladin Career & Technical High School), Desiree Henry (Osseo Area Learning Center), Anahi Rodriguez (Worthington Area Learning Center), and Daisah Var (Jennings Community School). They will have officer training and represent their peers throughout this next year.



Many thanks goes to Mike Myers-Schleif and Konie Brudwick, our conference coordinators, from St. Cloud ALC. They work very hard at planning this very successful annual conference for students and staff. Since Veteran's Day was the day after we left, we asked programs to bring a centerpiece made by their school for the Camp Ripley dining hall honoring those serving our country. Master Sargent Mark Durnio hosted us while at Camp Ripley. He addressed the group the first night and presented a session on leadership. Other presenters were: Derek Emery, Eliza Kelly, Patti Haasch, and Derek Greenfield. Derek Greenfield has been presenting at our Fall Leadership Conference for 21 years!

The next state-wide MAAP STARS student event will be Legislative Day at the State Capital February 22, 2017. It's a day for students to meet with Legislators and see their government in action. We hope many schools will make plans to come.

Please keep checking the MAAP website and "like" the MAAP Facebook page for the latest information on MAAP STARS events. You can also get information by contacting: Patti Haasch, pjhaasch@yahoo.com or 612-751-2490.



MAAP STARS Receives Wells Fargo Grant By Patti Haasch

Several folks worked on writing grants to help offset costs for the MAAP STARS activities this school year. We are so fortunate that Wells Fargo Bank felt our Fall Leadership and MAAP STARS Officer training was worthy of funding. MAAP received \$5,000 which will help with the fall expenses so we can have more money left for the Spring Events Conference. The Spring Conference had to be moved to a new location which will increase costs so this grant is perfect timing. The Spring Conference will be April 26 & 27, 2017 at the Double Tree Hotel in Bloomington. We are very grateful to Wells Fargo Bank for their contributions to MAAP STARS!

Administrative Workshop Update By Steve Allen

On November 18th we held our Annual MAAP Administrative Workshop. The Roseville Radisson did a very nice job

hosting our workshop. It was very well attended in spite of some inclement weather that invaded Minnesota that day. Michael Diedrich opened the session by giving our members an excellent update of the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).



The breakout sessions were very well attended and received some excellent scores on their evaluations. In the feedback section of the evaluations, our members indicated that they would like to:

- » See more information on alternative testing and measurement.
- » See more information on dealing with students with special education needs.
- » Learn how to facilitate mental health programs.
- » "Push innovation" in education.
- » See sessions that assisted new administrators.
- » See a session on leadership do's and don'ts.
- » Learn how to make their schools and programs more fiscally responsible.

The 2017 MAAP Administrative Workshop has been scheduled for November 3rd, 2017 and will be held at the Department of Education.

Elympics Results

By Tom Wendt

On Thursday, December 8th, a record 49 teams from all over the State registered for this year's Elympics! Here's a sample question: Only one host country of the modern Summer Olympics has failed to win a gold medal. How many gold medals did this same country win during their most recent hosting of the Winter Olympics? Do you know the answer?

Here's a few of the students comments after competing:

This is the hardest I've worked!

My brain hurts!

When do we get to do this again?

The Cyborg Dolphins of SW Metro High School claimed the championship with Fridley ALC and Jennings Community School finishing second and third.

Early on, there were some technical glitches, but so far, the feedback has been very positive.

One of the teachers said, "This event helps to promote teamwork and the philosophy, "it's not what you know but if you have the tools to get the answers.""

The final results are shown to the left:

Team Name	Program	Score	Rank
SW Metro Cyborg Dolphins	SW Metro High School	351.64	1
Fridley ALC	Fridley ALC	323.67	2
Jennings Salty Sophists	Jennings Community School	317.8	3
Team Super	Fairview Alternative High School	242.4	4
Yes Parrots	Youth Educational Services	207.62	5
DCALS Minions	Dakota County ALC	197.71	6
Long Prairie ALC Team 1	Long Prairie ALC	179.51	7
Long Prairie ALC Team 2	Long Prairie ALC	159.95	8
Storm Troopers	St. Croix Valley ALC	148.55	9
Google Geeks	Red River ALC	138.31	10
Brenda Perry	West Central Area Learning Center	118.41	11
Carol Middendorf	West Central Area Learning Center	116.84	12
Quadratics	St. Croix Valley ALC	114.17	13
Time Warp	St. Croix Valley ALC	110.89	14
RBEC Pathways	Pathways	106.8	15
Calculators	Red River ALC	106.22	16
Darian B	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	96.62	17
Tesla Tornadoes	St. Croix Valley ALC	93.78	18
Owatonna BB	Owatonna ALC	82.95	19
Cyndi's Pacers	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	80.8	20
Mary Tollas	BLCA-Brainerd	78.01	21
Mike's Master Minds	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	70.76	22
Wilderness Crew	Red River ALC	65.46	23
Dave Norling	West Central ALC	55.11	24
Konie Brudwick	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	53.14	25
The Pacemakers	Red River ALC	51.62	26
Frank Ayers	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	50.19	27
Brainerd Blue	BLCA-Brainerd	49.51	28
JGESA 1	Jane Goodall ESA	38.85	29
Owatonna A	Owatonna ALC	38.27	30
Sidney Femling	Jane Goodall ESA	37.51	31
We Tried...	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	36.79	32
The Dendrites	Red River ALC	33.54	33
infotechs	Red River ALC	28.34	34
Panther's Pride	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	21.71	35
Confectioners	Red River ALC	18.53	37
Savvy Seven	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	18.18	38
G. Goobers	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	17.96	39
A-Team	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	15.03	40
breanne strohmeier	St. Cloud McKinley ALC	10.19	41

Elympics

By Mike Meyers-Schleif

Elympics experience at McKinley Area Learning Center in St. Cloud

On Thursday, December 8th the E-lympics were held for alternative programs throughout the state of Minnesota. The event was organized by Tom Wendt of St. Croix Valley ALC. There were two sessions, the first from 9:15 to 11:15 and the second from 12:00 to 2:00. The competition was held on Schoology and began with three questions being released immediately, and one released every five minutes thereafter. The final three questions were posted 30 minutes before the closing time of each session. Teams had 30 minutes to answer each question, each of which was worth 100 total points. Those points were evenly divided among the teams submitting a correct response within the time limit. Students were able to use any resources other than school staff to answer the questions.

At McKinley Area Learning Center in St. Cloud, we decided to immerse the entire building in the experience after having just one team compete last year. Students competed with their advisory groups, with the teachers and classmates they knew best. We had a total of ten teams compete and over 80 students participate! In our school, we were able to utilize our mobile Chrome Book carts as well as Chrome boxes already stationed in some classrooms so teams had equal access to online resources. Many of our classrooms are equipped with SMART Boards as well, so questions were displayed for all to see and research could be done collectively in some cases. We found students who may not normally fully engage in classroom activities got into the competition, which was a pleasant surprise!

Tom Wendt does an amazing job of developing challenging questions, organizing the event, and following up by asking for feedback after the event in the spirit of continuous improvement. If your school has never participated in the E-lympics, please consider joining the next competition, which is tentatively scheduled for Spring 2017!

Lydell Taylor

By Steve Allen

On Friday, Kathy Lyerly sent me one of those messages that you know is eventually coming, but that you still don't want to receive. Kathy informed me that Lydell Taylor passed. For those of you who were not fortunate to have known Lydell, he was the Director of the St. Cloud ALC for many years and one of the real pioneers in alternative education. Lydell was also one of the founders of MAAP. Lydell and Senator James Pehler were instrumental in writing the original Area Learning Center legislation. Lydell was one of my personal mentors and he always encouraged and challenged me. He challenged your operating procedures and how you saw things. He made me mad and he made me laugh. His encouragement and support along with a couple others is one of the main reasons that I stayed in alternative education. Right up until the end, he continued to follow MAAP (he really enjoyed receiving our newsletters) and he encourage me. He would periodically drop me a note, saying in his own way, "You're not doing too bad . . . keep up the good work!" I'll miss those notes. Please keep Lydell's family in your thoughts and prayers.

Kathy Lyerly wrote:

In 1974, Del Taylor took a chance and hired me at the St. Cloud area learning center. I was 22 years old, had just graduated and had no experience. I retired after 40 years of teaching at the Area Learning Center, and the most important person at my retirement party was Del. He was a tireless advocate for at risk kids and taught

me that you must have relationships with our kids before you can teach them anything. He was my boss, my mentor, but most importantly, he was my friend. I will miss him more than words can say.

Former MDE Alternative Specialist
Gene Johnson wrote:

I feel terrible about the passing of Lydell. Lydell, the Director of the St Cloud Alternative Program and Arlo Renschler, the Director of the Brainerd Alternative Program in the early 70's were the leaders of alternative education. I was at Staples at that time trying to set up an alternative program myself. They were way ahead of me and everyone else. In the middle 80's they started meeting with key legislative leaders and MDE to develop MN statutes supporting alternative programs. With the assistance of legislative leaders and Bob Wedl of MDE they implemented statutes such as High School Graduation Incentives, the Area Learning Center law, Independent Study, Extended Year, etc. Many other alternative program leaders such as Steve Allen, John Sedey, Dan Daly and many more all over the State assisted in the development of Alternative Education as we know it today. I was very lucky when working at MDE to have Bob and other Department leaders bringing me in to help with these efforts. What a way to end my educational career. Alternative leaders and their programs have provided for successful lives for thousands of MN students. Thank you Lydell for all you have accomplished for MN students. We will never forget you and your accomplishments!!! Gene Johnson

Former Commissioner of Education
Bob Wedl wrote:
Dear Friends and colleagues,

Indeed Lydell was one of the cornerstones responsible for much of our current system of alternative education. He shared a vision of personalizing

education so that learners not successful in a non-personalized school could gain access to models of schooling that provided a sense of purpose with teachers that got to know each student and cared about them as individuals.

I have a personal experience with the St. Cloud ALC. Lydell and the teachers saved my nephew from a life of misery. Instead of being a dropout he graduated from the ALC and later from a four-year university with a computer science major. Today he owns his own company. I know you have hundreds of these stories of your own. But without the visionary old timers like Lydell, Arlo Renschler), Steve Allen, Gene Johnson, Wayne Jennings and others I do wonder if we would have the system that we do today.

Lydell will always remain in our "hall of fame."

*With great respect,
Bob Wedl*

