



# News

**Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs Newsletter**  
**Steve Allen, Editor**

Welcome to a Special Edition of the MAAP Newsletter. This newsletter will provide interesting details about the upcoming MAAP Conference. We hope to see you in Mankato on February 8th, 9th, and 10th. Remember: No Risk, No Reward! Reaching and Teaching At-Risk Youth.

## **No Risk, No Reward! Reaching and Teaching At-Risk Youth**

*By Chris Bodick*

Once again our members, the Alternative Education community of Minnesota, have stepped up and delivered on the challenge to present their experience and expertise of working with at-risk youth! The 2017 MAAP Conference has over 110 presenters and three great keynote speakers. Topics ranging from Reading to Robotics, College Readiness to Chemistry, Project Based Learning to Poetry will be presented by educators and experts in the field. Once again MAAP Members have taken a risk to present and the attendees and students will reap the rewards!

I look forward to seeing you at the conference! If you haven't yet decided to attend, there is still time to register. Please take a look at the wide variety of presentations in the At-A-Glance on the MAAP website.

## **Get Familiar with Our New Venue!**

*By Kristyn Martin*

MAAP is moving to Mankato! Check out this 2 minute video to get familiar with the Verizon Wireless Center,

hotels, and local establishments. Paste the following link into your browser to see the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8X7k8EY1bk8&t=4s>

You can also see the video on the Latest News page and the 2017 Conference page on the website.

## **Sign up for Text Alerts!**

Keep up with last minute changes and additions while attending the 2017 MAAP Conference by registering with our text alert system. We've had many MAAP members utilize this service to stay in touch about weather alerts, conference changes and more important information! Want to register? Text @maap2017 to 81010

## **Keynote Speaker Book Review: Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon by Yong Zhao**

*By Gretchen Harriman*

In his book, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?" Yong Zhao shares the inside story of China's educational system--the good and the bad. His historical and cultural explanations of the Chinese educational system are

captivating and serve as a cautionary tale to educators who covet external test scores as a means to defining academic excellence.

## **Contents**

- No Risk, No Reward! Reaching and Teaching At-Risk Youth 1
- Get Familiar with Our New Venue! 1
- Sign up for Text Alerts! 1
- Keynote Speaker Book Review: Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon by Yong Zhao 1
- 2017 Conference T-shirt Design 3
- 2017 Staff Member of the Year 3
- 2017 MAAP School of the Year - SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288 3
- Exemplary Recipients / Presidential Awards 4
- School Site Visits 4
- Sacred Circle Returning to State Conference 4
- Networking Extravaganza 4
- Scavenger Hunt...WIN A GOPRO 5
- Vendors and Exhibitors 5
- Media Release 5
- Going Paperless 5
- Conference Coupons and Discounts 5
- Conference Travel Alert 5

Zhao's insider account of the Chinese educational system not only exposes the commitment and sacrifices necessary to achieve top-ranking Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores but serves as a primer to understanding the historical, cultural, and political background that fuels China's educational pursuits and reforms. It also affirms the strengths of the American educational system and recognizes the assets that are often overlooked in the race to the top of international assessments, specifically the PISA test.

Zhao is an advocate of "an education that enhances individual's strengths, follows children's passions, and fosters their social-emotional development." He challenges the thinking of Americans who are enamored with the results that come from an authoritarian system, warning against compromising creativity and innovation. His commitment to innovation that "comes from the work of free-spirited people driven by passion, equipped with the necessary expertise and resources, and granted to the autonomy to explore" speaks to the core of alternative educators.

"Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon" is a must-read for educators who intuitively question the global comparisons and the over-valuation of test scores. It exposes faulty logic and comparisons, and intelligently reminds us to stay true to the unique strengths of our educational system.

## Book Review: We All Do Better: Economic Priorities for a Land of Opportunity

By Bill Zimmewicz



*We All Do Better: Economic Priorities for a Land of Opportunity* is written by David Bly, Minnesota State Representative and former President of the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs. Continuing in the rich tradition of our most progressive national and state political leaders—FDR, LBJ, Paul Wellstone, and more recently, Senator Bernie Sanders—David Bly outlines a richer economic future for our nation. It's noteworthy that David Bly and Senator Wellstone are both recipients of MAAP's Award for Exemplary Contributions.

The principles he describes in his reflectively short, but poignant manifesto are really common sense proposals that would, if enacted, require only political will. And in this political atmosphere where massive amounts of corporate money drowns all debate, David begins the book with a story of his wife, Dominique, and her struggles she experienced surviving in this dog-eat-dog world. David correctly points out that Dominique's story is not unique. Far too many Americans have lived and sadly, do live those experiences today—these people have to choose between food and their child's prescriptions. What do they need to pay now, their rent or the energy bill? They often don't have the money for both. David's thesis focuses on five key policy areas, or the Five Foundations, as he has coined. These five are:

- Quality education for everyone
- Health care for everyone
- A world-class transportation system
- Energy systems that maintain a clean and safe environment
- Living wages for all working people

David treats a chapter to each of the Five Foundations.

In the chapter dedicated to education, David pulls out all stops and guides readers to what education's aim should be. He questions the motivations and "expertise" of non-educators, including his colleagues in the legislature. He rightfully condemns high stakes standardized tests and performance-based merit pay. David also reminds readers that kinesthetic and affective domains in teaching and learning are equally important to the academic focus.

He sums up this chapter by insisting that teachers are not the problem, but part of the solution. This is comforting to read, since frauds like Arne Duncan, Michelle Rhee and others spent most of their worthless careers criticizing teachers. I prefer to read thoughtful words from someone who has served in education, than the charlatans and ignoramuses who have been far too influential than they deserved to be. *We All Do Better* sets the record straight.

The fifth foundation dealing with living wages as described the chapter titles, "Working More, Making Less," David delivers another targeted body blow to those who advocate trade agreements and have worked diligently to destroy the middle and working classes.

It's important to read this short platform in one or two sittings if possible. All of the concepts are intertwined. David argues that we must focus on all Five Foundations.



This is an important book for all to read, perhaps most importantly for MAAP members. David Bly will be discussing this book in a session at the conference on Friday morning. MAAP is selling the book in the vendor area. Please try and attend.

Finally, David reminds readers that the foundations benefit all of us. We all will gain from establishing and maintaining the foundations. He warns that if we do not begin toward this brighter path, our society will certainly harm all of us. It does not matter how rich some are, a crumbling infrastructure or a poorly skilled workforce will be the detriment to all of us. After all, this is the United States. We are not a third world nation. Again, the only obstacles are short sightedness and lack of political will.

## 2017 Conference T-shirt Design

By Steve Allen

A special thank you goes out to Kristin Tuel for all of her help with designing and printing of our conference t-shirts! Here's this year's conference t-shirt design:



## 2017 Staff Member of the Year

By Kathy Lyerly



Mike Myers-Schleif  
McKinley Area Learning Center

Mike has been a teacher at ALC for 19 years. During those years, he has been not only an outstanding and creative social studies teacher, but also a leader in activities that benefit alternative students. Mike has been involved in the Fall Leadership activity for many years. He has served in an organizational and leadership role as well as a mentor for students from McKinley ALC who have participated in the activity.

You have also seen Mike at the MAAP Stars competition for a number of years. He coaches, mentors, and supervises students as they prepare to compete, and has also taken on an increasing role in the organization and leadership of that activity.

Mike has also been involved in the Youth Service Project for 19 of its 23 years. It is one of the longest running service projects in the state, and the longest service project between District 742 and St. Cloud Veterans Administration Medical Center. Mike is involved in fundraising activities, student recruitment for the program and planning activities for the events at the VA during the school year, as well as participating in the program while on site at the VAMC.

The Youth Service Project is a program

that pairs at-risk adolescents with area veterans in our community. This is a site that our students would rarely access and certainly not volunteer there without the program. He makes sure that participants are good students and citizens at school and that they truly understand what these veterans have given for our country. He does this in his classroom with students, but most importantly, models it while at the VA. Part of the program that was added is called "Vet Connection" where our students interview a veteran on three occasions during the school year. It is moving and often life changing for our students to hear their stories and creates a bond between our students and the veterans.

Mike is a teacher that has high expectations for students, both in his classroom and in the activities he is involved with outside of the building. Students have great respect for Mike, and he is truly influential in their lives. He stays in contact with students and many will come back years later to work with us at the VA or to simply visit Mike at school.

Mike deserves to be the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs Teacher of the Year.

## 2017 MAAP School of the Year – SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288

By Cindy Walters



SouthWest Metro High School

In 2013 the Carver Scott Educational

Cooperative and the Minnesota River Valley Special Education Cooperative merged to become the SouthWest Metro Educational Cooperative, and with legislative approval July 1, 2016, it became the SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288. The Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative (CSEC) was one of the original four Area Learning Centers created by the legislature in 1987 so has more experience and historical knowledge of alternative education than almost every program in the state. It has been a leader in the field and has applied lessons learned through the many changes in education models over all these years.

Like so many ALCs in the state of Minnesota, students who had not found success in the K-12 system were initially drawn to the program to make up credits. However, they stayed because they found a place where the teachers understood them, they found a place to belong. From the beginning the program incorporated a dedicated Case-Management system to ensure every student had one adult who remained a constant presence throughout their educational experience with us. This structure helps achieve one of the most effective strategies used to engage at risk youth, that of each student establishing an ongoing, meaningful relationship with a caring adult.

SWMetro HS, the new version of the ALC, continues the long tradition of providing a second chance for youth at risk for academic failure and economic insufficiency. Even though the problems and issues that students face today have become infinitely more complicated, the staff remain committed to finding what works for each student. Several program options are available to help them create a plan to overcome the barriers and challenges keeping them from finishing high school.

A major key to the success of SWMetro HS is those program components that typically are offered in isolation in other programs are seamlessly incorporated into the program at large. The program is based on the philosophy that “we care for all students” so all staff work with every kid. Essential Mental Health services include counseling for addiction, depression, anxiety and more, but the mental health professional doesn’t just conduct groups for those with a diagnosis, they provide support and educational activities to all students in the program. Essential services for young mothers such as childcare, parenting skills and counseling are available throughout the day as are special education services for those with diverse needs. The career counselor who helps facilitate a positive transition to what comes next for students when they leave us is available to all students, not just those who may be college bound.

## **Exemplary Recipients / Presidential Awards**

*By Steve Allen*

There will also be two Exemplary Award Recipients and two Presidential Award recipients named at this year’s conference. However, you have to come to the luncheon on Thursday to find out who these individuals are!

## **School Site Visits**

*By Steve Allen*

We will be arranging for two school site visits as part of this year’s conference. On Thursday, there will be a site visit arranged to go to the Minnesota New Country School from 1:50 PM to 3:50 PM. On Friday, there will be a site visit arranged to go to Mankato Central High School (ALC) and Freedom School (Recovery School) on Friday from 9:50 AM to 11:50 AM. Meet in the Verizon lobby for transportation.

## **Sacred Circle Returning to State Conference**

*By Delon Musselman*

It is an honor to be able to return to the Annual MAAP State Conference and bring the Sacred Circle to our great learning community.

This year in Circle we will have the privilege of having students from three school sites joining us. We will have students from Henderson New Country Elementary School, Henderson New Country Senior High students from the Faribault Area Learning Center! These students have participated in Circles in their schools and are extremely skilled in the Circle process.

Again, this year, there will be a gallery option for people to observe Circle as their schedule allows.

The Circle question for this year is:  
**What Really Matters?**

## **Networking Extravaganza**

*By Kristyn Martin*

The Networking Extravaganza will take place from 7:00-9:00pm, on Thursday, February 9th. This year our event will be held at THE BANK, which is a historic building within the Verizon Wireless Center. What should attendees expect? A cash bar, photo booth, RAFFLE PRIZES and an amazing chance to get connected with alternative educators across the state. We will also do the grand prize drawing for the GOPRO camera at the Networking Extravaganza. Want to know how to WIN the GOPRO camera? Read below:



## Scavenger Hunt...WIN A GOPRO

In your registration materials is a scavenger hunt. Complete all questions on the scavenger hunt and turn it in to your regional director and you will have a chance to win a GOPRO camera! The drawing for the GOPRO will take place at the networking extravaganza. You must be present to win.

## Vendors and Exhibitors

*By Deanna Chiodo*

This year, we have 21 vendors and exhibitors signed up to attend this year's conference. Make sure you visit them on Wednesday and Thursday (most of them will not be at the conference on Friday). Also, don't forget to participate in Vendor Bingo and the chance to win some unique prizes. See you in a few weeks!

## Media Release

*By Steve Allen*

The last page of this Newsletter is a copy of a "Media Release" for our conference. Feel free to send it to your local newspapers. You can even add a personal touch to it. Like "Staff members from the such and such school will be attending this great event!"

We also put a copy of the Media Release on the 2017 Conference webpage also.

## Going Paperless

*By Steve Anderson*

It is once again that time of year when we go to the Boat Show, Camping Show, Home & Garden Show, Sportsmen Show, etc. If you're like me, then you dutifully get the plastic bag and fill it with what seems at the time like

extremely interesting brochures. It sits in the Reading Room for a couple of weeks, and then goes in the back of the closet. One time when my wife was on a cleaning kick, we found five of the bags in the bottom of my closet.

When I have gone to the MAAP conference, I dutifully collect all the handouts in a plastic bag. They sit by my desk for a couple of weeks, and, then they are "filed" in a drawer never to be seen again. I usually remember a good idea I heard at the conference, but I can rarely find the material to actually use it in a class. If I do find it, it is a paper copy, and, I have to recreate something on the computer to use it in class.

In an effort to solve this problem, we are going to try to make as many of the handouts as possible at the conference to be available on the website, as well as having paper copies available. The At-A-Glance schedules are already available on the 2017 Conference webpage. Everything that is sent to the printers will also be uploaded to the website. We are going to request presenters to provide electronic copies of any handouts, if they feel comfortable doing that. We understand that there are copy right laws that need to be obeyed. Being the first year we are trying this, both paper and paperless copies will be available. The only exception to this might be a presenter that does not want to incur the cost of providing paper copies of handouts. As part of the conference evaluation, we will ask you to provide feedback on how you want to proceed at the next conference.

Thanks for your patience in advance.

## Conference Coupons and Discounts

*By Greg Zimmerman*

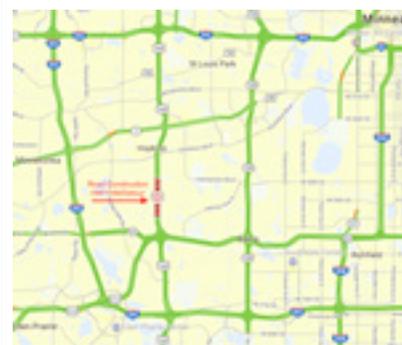
The MAAP Conference is best known

for being the premier professional development conference for alternative educators in the state of Minnesota. Attendees will have access to hundreds of breakout sessions and hear from some incredible keynote speakers. We always learn so much from each other over these three days. Equally valuable is the evening free time built into the conference. Sometimes our biggest takeaways come from conversations had over dinner or informal in-services disguised as a game of bean bags. The area around the Mankato Verizon Center provides many opportunities for folks to network with fellow members and reconnect with co-workers in a unique way. The MAAP Conference planning committee has worked to find local establishments who are willing to provide coupons and discounts to help offset your conference going costs. Look for them near the registration area!

## Conference Travel Alert

*By Chris Bodick*

If you're traveling through the Southwest of the Metro area towards Mankato, road construction on HWY169 and a possible detour will cause you a travel delay. You may want to use an alternate route if possible.





**Media Release**

**January 17, 2017**

Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs proudly announces their up-coming 34th Annual State Conference that will be held at the Mankato Verizon Center on February 8th, 9th, and 10th, 2017.

Keynote speakers will be:

- Craig Boykin (Wednesday, 5:00 PM)
- Yong Zhao (Thursday, 10:55 AM)
- Patty Wetterling (Friday, 8:40 AM)

There will also be over 100 sessions, large and small! This includes presentations by Minnesota Department of Education Specialists, college professors, professionals from many specialty areas of education and personal development, practitioners from alternative and Charter schools and vendors representing various educational products and services. Many of the sessions will focus on methods of instruction, curriculum, assessment and social/emotional needs of students and families.

Two school site visits have also been arranged and numerous networking opportunities have been built into the conference schedule.

Registration information can be found at [www.maapmn.org](http://www.maapmn.org). For more information, like us on Facebook or contact:

Steve Allen,  
Executive Coordinator  
[sallen958@gmail.com](mailto:sallen958@gmail.com)  
763-286-6328

Chris Bodick,  
Conference Chair  
[cbodick@riverbend.k12.mn.us](mailto:cbodick@riverbend.k12.mn.us)  
507-766-1274