

THE MAINE APPRISE

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From the President . . .

**Paula Callan, Principal, Messalonskee High School
and President of the MPA**

As we approach the one year anniversary of when the world of education came to a screeching halt, I thought it a good time to reflect on all the good that has transpired in schools across the state. Our staff have been the heroes in these last ten months. They have had to step outside their comfort zone and in some instances become the students. Learning new technology such as Zooming, On-Line Assessing, Remote Learning, Synchronous Learning, and the list goes on. These efforts cannot go unnoticed and each day that we are in school it is because of the efforts that our teachers have put forth. Our hats go off to the custodial staff who make sure that our buildings are as clean as possible. Sometimes putting in hours beyond their regular day to pitch in and help out. The cafeteria workers who prepare meals daily for not only the students who are in school but those who are learning remotely as well. The support staff that each of us has in our building are showing us what it means to be a team player. Always reaching out to lend a helping hand in areas that they are not familiar with.

Our students have shown us what it means to be patient, flexible, and forgiving. They have weathered this storm with

grace and dignity beyond their young years. Having them in our buildings, if only for a day or two, brings energy and renewed hope that once again our hallways will be filled with chatter and uncontrollable laughter. They, the students, are the shining stars in all that appears gray at the moment.

Michael Jordan once said, "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or walk around it". As building level administrators and athletic administrators, you have exemplified what this message states. The hours you have put in trying to provide the best educational opportunities for all your students is truly amazing. I am certain that there have been times when your minds have been weary and your bodies exhausted but because you are an educational leader and realize the importance of providing all students, in every school, on a daily basis, with a solid educational experience you push on. If there is one message to leave you with it is this, Education is too important to do in isolation, so don't hesitate to lean on those teachers, support staff, custodial staff, cafeteria workers, and students, as they are part of the team that makes your school a great school.

Remember, you've got this!

Congratulations to the following Honorees that were inducted into the MPA 2020 "Hall of Excellence"

*Don Atkinson
Bob & Gertrude Butler
Ralph Damren
Jim DiFrederico
Jack Hardy
Barbara Krause
Fern Masse
Irving "I.J." Pinkham
Ann Turbyne Andrews
Robert "Bob" Whytock*

**LIVE AND IN-PERSON AT
THE SAMOSET**

**2020-2021 Assistant
Principals' Conference**

April 1-2, 2021

Thursday

Alex Kajitani

*"Leadership Secrets That Work:
From the Classroom to
the Boardroom"*

and

Friday

Isabel Ekman

*"504 and Special Education Law
in a COVID World"*

Click [HERE](#) to Register

**MPA Virtual and On-Demand
SPRING CONFERENCE**

"Surviving and Thriving & Maslow Before Bloom"

with Andrew Marotta (Thursday) and Dr. Bryan Pearlman (Friday)

April 29—30, 2021 ~ Click [HERE](#) to Register

PROFESSIONAL OFFERINGS

VIRTUAL Secretaries' Conference

"Having Hard Conversations In Difficult Times"

With Jennifer Abrams

April 5, 2021 ~ 9:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Click [HERE](#) to Register.

Volunteer of the Year Award: Dr. Phyllis Deringis Service to Maine Youth

Do you know an outstanding adult volunteer who is making a difference for students in your school, your district, or possibly beyond? Each year the MPA honors up to two awardees with the Dr. Phyllis Deringis Service to Maine Youth Award at the Spring Conference Awards Banquet.

Click [HERE](#) for Nomination Form.

Larry LaBrie Award for Outstanding Contributions to the MPA Interscholastic Division

Do you know of an OUTSTANDING person(s) and would like to recognize him/her for this prestigious recognition, please click on the link below and fill out the Nomination Form and submit it electronically no later than Friday, April 2, 2021.

Click [HERE](#) for Nomination Form.

2021 Secretary/ Administrative Assistant of the Year

Do you know of an OUTSTANDING secretary and/or administrative assistant and would like to recognize him/her for this prestigious recognition, please click on the link below and fill out the Nomination Form and submit it electronically no later than Friday, April 2, 2021.

Click [HERE](#) for Nomination Form.

Bar Association Announces Student Essay & Art Poster Contests for Law Day

Maine students in grades 4-12 are invited to submit entries for the annual Law Day contests sponsored by the Maine State Bar Association. This year's theme is "Advancing the Rule of Law Now." Entries should reflect the student's interpretation of this prompt: What steps, if any, do you feel need to be taken in order to make the rule of law more fair and just for all?

Students in grades 4-8 may participate in the art poster contest and students in grades 9-12 may participate in the essay contest. The entry deadline is April 1.

Modest cash prizes will be awarded for students and teachers. First and second-place entries will be published online and in the *Maine Bar Journal*.

Law Day, which is held annually on May, provides an opportunity to understand how law and the legal process protect our liberty, strive to achieve justice, and contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share.

For complete details, including contest guidelines and an entry form, visit www.mainebar.org/lawday.

Observances

* March 1-31

- *Music in Our Schools Month*— Find celebration resources and lesson plans on the "*National Association for Music Education Website*" (Click [HERE](#)).

* March 1-31

- *National Nutrition Month*— Created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the campaign focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. (Click [HERE](#) for more information).

* March 2

- *NEA's Read Across America Day*

* March 7-13

- *National School Social Work Week*—Click [HERE](#) for more information).

* March 8-12

- *National School Breakfast Week*— The #NSBW21 theme is "Score Big with School Breakfast." (Click [HERE](#) for more information).

* March 14

- Daylight Savings Time Starts

* March 20

- First Day of Spring

* March 22

- *World Water Day*

Planning to Retire?

If you are or know about a principal, assistant principal, or career and technology center director who is planning to retire this year, please notify Patty (pnewman@mpa.cc) at the MPA by Friday, April 30, 2021.

Prudential Financial names Spirit of Community Class of 2021, celebrating young volunteers for tackling the challenges of a changing world

Prudential Financial today announced its 2021 class of Spirit of Community Awards State Honorees — 102 middle level and high school students from across the United States whose volunteering has addressed critical community needs in a year of upheaval.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, conducted annually by Prudential in partnership with NASSP, honors students in grades 5-12 for making meaningful contributions to their communities through volunteer service.

“We created the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards 26 years ago to highlight and support the work of young people taking on the challenges of a changing world – a mission that rings truer than ever given the events of last year,” said Charles Lowrey, Prudential’s chairman and CEO. “We are proud to celebrate the vision and determination of Spirit of Community’s Class of 2021, and all the ways they’re making their communities safer, healthier, and more equitable places to live.”

The 2021 State Honorees – the top middle level and high school volunteers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia – were selected for service initiatives completed, at least in part, between the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2020. Selection was based on criteria including impact, effort, initiative and the personal growth demonstrated over the course of the project.

Many of this year’s honorees either directly addressed needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic or adapted existing projects to better accommodate health and safety protocols. Many honorees worked to provide reliable meals to food-insecure households and dismantle barriers to virtual schooling. In the early days of the pandemic, when personal protective equipment was in short supply, one honoree rallied his community to 3D-print thousands of face shields for front-line workers. Several honorees dedicated their efforts to easing the hardship of isolation for nursing home residents. Another

er created a support network for students of color to share their own experiences in light of the Black Lives Matter movement.

“It speaks volumes about the character of today’s secondary school students that the Spirit of Community program heard from more than 20,000 applicants this fall – most of them stories of young volunteers overcoming the hardships of a global pandemic to support those in need,” said Ronn Nozoe, Chief Executive Officer, NASSP. “While we’re especially proud to celebrate this year’s 102 State Honorees, NASSP applauds every student who’s found a way to volunteer this past year. You inspire your peers and adults alike to remember that, even in times of crisis, we all have something to give.”

Each of the 102 State Honorees named today will receive a \$2,500 scholarship, a silver medallion and an invitation to the program’s virtual national recognition celebration in April, where 10 of them will be named America’s top youth volunteers of the year. Those 10 National Honorees will earn an additional \$5,000 scholarship, a gold medallion, a crystal trophy for their nominating organization and a \$5,000 grant for a nonprofit charitable organization of their choice.

To read the names and stories of this year’s State Honorees, visit <http://spirit.prudential.com>.

About Prudential Financial: Prudential Financial, Inc. (NYSE: PRU), a financial wellness leader and premier active global investment manager, has operations in the United States, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Prudential’s diverse and talented employees help to make lives better by creating financial opportunity for more people. Prudential’s iconic Rock symbol has stood for strength, stability, expertise and innovation for more than a century. For more information, please visit news.prudential.com.

PR Tips for Principals

Inclusive Practices: Guiding Principles Crucial to Diversity.

Past members of NSPRA’s Communication Equity and Diversity Task Force developed a fact sheet around the broader concept of diversity and inclusiveness, and how critical it is in today’s schools.

Below are a few of their guiding principles:

- **Foster Community.** Celebrate together when you can. Avoid holding “exclusive” events unless there is a reason to do so from a professional development perspective.
- **Don’t Make Assumptions.** If you plan to honor or celebrate a culture, consult with members of that community and ask them to help you plan and deliver the activity or program.
- **Be Sensitive to the Needs of All School Community Members.** Ask, “Would this be offensive to someone?” If the answer is “yes,” consider going in a different direction or consult with members of that diverse community for input.
- **Promote Equitable and Inclusive Programs** or activities in your school that offer a balance of perspectives and that enable participants to see themselves reflected.

—National School Public Relations Association,
Principal Communicator,
February 2021.

Follow us on Twitter!

Holly Couturier —
@HCouturierMPA

Mike Bisson—@MikeBissonMPA

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No one knows a building leader's job better than you. You know the challenges, rewards, and strategies for successful school leadership. How about sharing some of that knowledge? Writing for the *Maine Apprise* is a great way to contribute to the principalship and to the Association.

You have always served as each others best resource—let's continue learning from each other and enhance your own professional development!

Feel free to submit an article that is between 800-1,000 words. Please submit as a Word document or a Google doc. Please e-mail it to tmcnear@mpa.cc. The MPA will contact you if we choose your article for our publication.

Thoughts From A Principal:

Respectfully submitted by,
Susan Thibedeau, Reeds Brook Middle School Principal

I am in my second year as a principal. Let me break that down for you. Six months into a new job in March 2020, schools closed down, some literally overnight, and the most widespread and systemic experiment in education began. With amazing rapidity schools created new models for learning. Last spring was a worrisome time, a true emergency situation. As weeks stretched into months, schools created more sustainable, more long term learning structures. Although there were many unknowns, the path seemed clear. Follow safety protocols to safeguard everyone's health, offer academic and emotional support to students, offer professional and emotional support to staff -- do the best you can. As a new school leader, I provided direction, implemented district plans, answered questions, and offered reassurances, as best I could. Our school pulled together and continued with our focus on challenge and support for all students. 2020 had pushed my leadership into directions I never expected, but not in a moral direction. Student and staff needs had driven most of our work, not what is right or what is wrong.

Then, December 6, 2021 happened. I, like many around the world, felt the need to bear witness to this threat to democracy, to watch coverage of the insurrection, to see how lies can lead to dangerous and violent action. It wasn't until the next morning that I realized the insurrection was a leadership moment for me. I realized I needed to provide direction to staff about what to do in the classroom the morning after. Thankfully, we have a gifted communicator as our superintendent, who framed the response as "standing together" and provided resources about emotional support for students in her district email. My email to our middle school staff stated in part, "We can be a place of

calm and consistency in a moment of turmoil." I focused on managing emotions, on maintaining normalcy. In talking with other principals and teachers, many followed the same path of steering clear of the politics while providing students with opportunities to express feelings. Although these decisions were made in an emergency situation where emotions were running high (similar to last spring), were they made to meet students' needs? I wonder if I took a cowardly route. If my focus on emotional needs meant we ignored student needs to understand the moment. If my concern about student and parent response muddled the clearness of the path. Did I rob students of an important framing opportunity by not leading teachers towards speaking the truth? A decision was made that has moral implications.

I still have no answer about how we should have addressed the insurrection with students in our care. I can only hope that managing the feelings in the moment was helpful and that framing the truth will come at a less emotional time. These two crises -- the pandemic and the insurrection -- show the need to remain focused on students in the most challenging of times. Yet, keeping students physically safe with masks and social distancing requires less moral decision or courage than helping students understand dangers of treasonous violence based on governmental lies. Finding a clear path in leading schools through the worst moments has been required of principals in the past and unfortunately will be required in the future. I believe student needs offer direction for decisions, but wonder about the moral implications of those decisions.

The Current: How is the Culture of Your Administrative Team

Respectfully submitted by,

Jennifer McGee, Atwood Primary School Principal and Member of the RSU 18 Administrative Team

Fifteen years ago, I moved from the district where I had worked for 21 years to the district where I am currently an elementary principal today. When I first arrived, my new superintendent drove me to the school I would be leading, and we talked casually along the way. I remember being nervous when he told me the administrative team primarily communicated using email.

In my previous district, we had not yet used email as a primary tool of interaction, so I was instantly worried. This district seemed more progressive and I felt inept. I'll never forget in one of my first emails to the assistant superintendent, I signed my message "Love, Jenny". I panicked, having no idea how to "un-send" my email, and had to call my new boss and explain that I hadn't meant to sign off using the word "love". Awkward.

Flash forward fifteen years, and I, along with all of you, became a leader in a school where all of the learners were remote, and all of my teachers were using brand new technology and instructional platforms...literally, overnight. This was a far stretch from the days when I was just a fledgling email user.

Out of my 36 years as a public educator, I never needed my administrative team more than in this particular, peculiar year.

I teach a class at Thomas College called "Educational Leadership." One of the units is all about intentionally enhancing the culture and climate of your schoolhouse. Beyond the walls of our schools, I think we need to explore the culture and the climate that exists within our administrative teams, because, I don't know about you, but I needed my peers in the principalship, more than ever, this school year.

Dr. Rosie Ward illustrates the difference between climate and culture using a powerful analogy. She suggests you imagine a flowing river. Everything you see on the surface – the flow of the water, the shape of the riverbed – is climate. "Climate itself is a manifestation of the underlying, ever-changing, yet powerful, current: culture."

Climate in your administrative team may be enhanced, in the moment, when you receive lunch during your administrative team meetings, or you are given a snow day to work from home...these are good examples of fanning the flames of a positive climate.

However, the culture is the current. What are the traditions and ritualized behaviors of your administrative teams? Trying times and giant challenges magnify these realities in technicolor.

I used to have a boss who would say to our administrative team: "There are no points for originality. If there is an idea that works, steal that idea."

In the past twelve months, our administrative team, a collegial crew by nature, shifted into, what I believe, is the very model of a highly functioning team. Anyone who had an idea that seemed viable, it was put out on our email thread. We shared everything: ideas, materials, letters, structures, communication platforms, fliers, slide shows, surveys, practices, and, perhaps most importantly, humor.

Climate, how it feels when you are operating within the culture of your workplace, is not something that "happens" to you...you are an important part of its creation. For example, if you currently are not enjoying a positive culture within your administrative team, what are you actively doing to change this? You would be surprised how quickly climate can shift (like a Maine winter) when you are an active participant, encouraging ongoing positive participation and sharing.

I remember one particularly difficult meeting with our administrative team last spring. I entered the room already feeling overwhelmed. I decided, prior to going into the meeting, that I would listen carefully rather than share, and I would give affirmations to those sharing. I left the meeting feeling refreshed and in a positive mindset. Sometimes when we enter a meeting with a negative or pessimistic attitude, it's better to be intentional with our interactions rather than spreading the negativity into the room.

I suggest taking the time, as a team, to assess the culture. Are your embedded rituals and traditions suggestive of a highly functioning team: hard working, ethical, forward thinking, flexible, respectful of differences, continually learning and growing, collaborative, or are you stuck in another direction? As Jim Collins tells us in *Good to Great*, you will never get better until the *brutal facts* are on the table.

Our jobs, as school administrators, have never been more difficult. Being able to quickly call upon a fellow teammate, within your a-team, can make the difference between burn-out and sharing the burden. Do your part to enhance the culture: share your continuous new learning, model strong practices, encourage the growth of those around you, let your differences make you stronger. But also, do your part to enhance your administrative team climate. Listen thoughtfully. Share willingly. Answer honestly. Text, call, send notes of encouragement. Laugh heartily.

One thing I have learned, through it all. We are better together. And if you erroneously sign an email to your administrative team using the word "love"...you may actually mean it!