



# NASS

# News

Fall 2020 Issue

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## A Word from the Executive Director



Dear NASS Members:

I hope this edition of NASS News finds you all safe and well. Hopefully, you've all managed to open schools in the safest and best ways to

meet the needs of your students, families, staff and communities.

I wanted to let you know that this will be the last edition of NASS News under the current support structure for NASS. As we are all experiencing, COVID-19 has taken a deep financial toll on so many aspects of our professional and personal lives and NASS is no exception. NASS can no longer operate as currently structured and will be shutting down at the end of September.

Having served as the Executive Director for only a year, it saddens me to share this news with you given the limited support that exists for superintendents,

particularly to share ideas and to use our voices to help advance public education.

So, in this final edition of NASS News, we return to our focus on leadership and building high performing teams. You'll be inspired by fellow NASS member Michael Goddard as he outlines the power of teams.

In my editorial space, I focus on the importance of teaching our young people civic engagement as issues of race and social justice grip our country. What a powerful legacy for an educator to help students find their voice and how to use it to make change!

Going forward, I will continue to support superintendents and teams that advance Whole Child education through my own firm, **JPR - Taking Risks for Kids**. You can learn more about our work and contact me [here](#). Moreover, I'm excited to share that I will be working closely with the **Reynolds Center for Teaching, Learning, and Creativity** founded by New York Times BestSelling author Peter H. Reynolds. Together, we are teaching superintendents and their leadership teams how to use the two powerful levers of Creativity and Compassion to prepare leaders to think systemically, design locally, and lead with humility. You can learn more about the Reynolds Center and contact us [here](#).

Finally, I want to leave you with these thoughts. Without question, this public health crisis caused by Covid-19 has us in an unprecedented place as educators. Still, the pandemic has also created enormous opportunities. We are being forced to advance distance learning, embrace small group learning, experiment with outdoor instruction, utilize out of school time and community partners to meet children where they are and lift up the importance of civics and civic engagement for our students and families.

If we lean into this moment, we can redesign teaching and learning in ways we only imagined a few years ago. If we are willing to work together and create shared visions of what and how we want children to know, learn and do, we can achieve things that will be enduring. Let's do what it takes to ensure this pandemic and all that was lost shall not have been in vain. Courageous leadership!

What an honor this has been to serve you! I wish all of you well. Please reach out if we can be of continued service.

Be safe and well,

Jonathan Raymond

## Thoughts From the Executive Director

**E Pluribus Unum, From many, one.**

I had been planning a blog about the larger purpose of public education, which is to cultivate young people into active participants in our democracy. I was going

to call out the importance of preparing our young people to be leaders and voters who understand and protect our unique system of government, founded in the idea that all people are created equal, and all are equally entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

I had been planning to write a piece about how urgent it is that public schools empower and excite young people to find their voice, take action and tackle challenges and pressing problems in their communities. That doing well in school goes hand in glove to contributing back to your community, neighborhood or family. I was going to write how important it is for our schools to produce engaged citizens — poised to advance humanity. And then another police shooting happened in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

As a parent and educator, I'm angry, and afraid for the future of our children growing up in a country where hate has been normalized, police and mass shootings followed by no surprise and there is no action from our elected officials. And as an American, I'm filled with sorrow for a country whose leaders seem to have lost their way and lack the courage to do what is right and necessary.

There was a time when I could trust that in the aftermath of killings motivated by hate, our leaders would recommit themselves and this great country to the principles enshrined in our Constitution, and not to the misused notion of "freedom." Recommit all of us to the motto E Pluribus Unum — From Many, One, which represents the core value that our diversity of thought, worship, identity and origin is what makes us strong. Recommit to the ideals George Washington espoused to the Jewish community in Newport, Rhode Island in

August, 1790: "... For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."

Washington understood what was at stake. During the American Revolution, he fought for the notion that all men were created equal and bestowed with a set of unalienable rights of liberty, justice and the pursuit of happiness. (His status as a slave owner reminds us of the need for national values to constantly evolve.) But if our leaders today won't lead, then our people must. And to stand by our core values as Americans, we must know and understand them. We must teach them to our children. We must teach them rich historical content from original texts like the Declaration of Independence and the one quoted above. We must give them the skills to inquire deeply, organize and advocate for a position through spoken and written words, build coalitions and argue passionately from positions based on empathy, truths and values.

As Jews, we affix a mezuzah to our doorposts so that we always are reminded of our obligations to God and to humankind. As Americans, we teach our children about democracy to remind them of our mutual obligations to one another: to pursue equality and practice justice. To reject prejudice, divisiveness, hate, and bias as undemocratic, and as un-American.

Today, the words of John Dewey — the father of American public education — resonate with special meaning. "If we

teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow." I always understood this to mean that outmoded curricula and teaching methods can't prepare our children for the jobs and lives of the future.

But today, I read it more literally. If we don't steep our children in democratic values and institutions, they may graduate into an America where their very lives are threatened just because they're Jewish, or Hispanic, or African American, or LGBTQ, or immigrants. No way!

How do we teach democracy in our schools? By practicing democracy in our schools. We can start by ensuring all the adults working on behalf of children do so together, regardless of rank and status. We can start by giving students voice, choice and presence in the what, when, where and how of their learning. We can welcome, engage and empower our families and communities into our schools to take advantage of their rich tapestries of talent, gifts and resources. In a real democracy, all of us have something to contribute. We advance humanity based on our unique race, our faith, our abilities, our voice.

Whole Child education places the child at the center and requires that adults cultivate the conditions so children can thrive and reach their fullest potential. And when each community rallies around and nurtures the innate potential and beauty of each child — we build strong and vibrant communities. E Pluribus Unum. From Many, One.

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## Members Spotlight

### Teammates in Leadership



**Michael Goddard, Ed.D.**  
**Superintendent**  
**Lovejoy ISD**

“There are no problems we cannot solve together, and very few that we can solve by ourselves.”

– Lyndon Johnson

Could there be anything more powerful than a strong group of teammates that lifts you up when you need it the most? Especially in times like these when physical distance could lead to isolation and loneliness. Teammates are essential.

There is an absolute truth that every great work done by an “individual” may give glory to a lionized man or woman; but without a doubt, there were teammates who encouraged them along the way.

Even the teams given the greatest of titles will tell you that camaraderie and connectedness were the keys to their success, not the performance of one individual. A “team” can mean your work

team, your family, your community or even a group or organization you are a part of. But no matter the structure... What does it take to be a great teammate?

I’ve had some amazing teammates and I’ve had some challenging ones. Couple years ago, I went back for a reunion and it was fun to see my offensive linemen who protected me for four years in college as their quarterback. I love these guys.

It reminded me that being a great teammate has little to do with size, shape, color, or background, but it has everything to do with heart.

Five Qualities of Being a Great Teammate:

5. Know Your Teammates Well – All Players Have a Place When They Add the Most Value. How well do you know your teammates? Do you know their interests, strengths, and areas of most need of support? The Great Teams and Teammates know each other well.

4. Make Everyone Feel a Part of the Team– Great Teams Have Great Depth. That means each and every one who is a part of your team has a role, but also an understanding and appreciation of their importance. Remember, if you are leading and no one is following, all you are doing is taking a walk!

3. Hold Each Other Accountable — Teammates must Count on Each Other When it Counts. A single stick can be broken easily. A bundle of sticks bound together is near impossible to break. Without each other, you can be broken easily. The power of a team is that when bound together you may bend but you will not break.

Do you have the courage to have difficult conversations with the right intent of making each other stronger and making the team better?

2. Communicate with Each Other – Investing in Each other Pays Dividends  
Never assume. When we assume we make a...well, you know. It is so critical to talk. When we don't talk, people make up their own communication— their story. It is the story we all tell ourselves with no facts to back it up. This leads us to conclusions that have no basis.

We must talk to know, and must know to grow, and must grow to achieve!

1. Keep The Main Thing the Main Thing – The Goal is More Important than the Role. You can't achieve greatness as a team, group, or family with only one player. It takes a team. But as we lead we must keep our vision, direction and absolutes in the forefront of all we do. What is the main purpose of your team? Far too often we get distracted by all the "extras" around us that we forget our ultimate purpose. Great teams don't miss "the main thing" and they never let the goal get out of their sights. We can do amazing things when we have teammates who encourage us, lift us up, and believe in us.

Now, go hug your teammates! Let them know you are so glad you are a part of their team, and together, do great things!

Proud to be a partner in Leadership with you!

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