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BOARD BRIEFS

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To Honor Education

As I round out my first year as a Tri County Board Trustee, I attended the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) Annual Leadership Conference (ALC) with fellow board members Lana Ford and Jill Fennessy. The conference ran from Friday, November 8th to Monday the 11th in Acme, Michigan at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa. I attended the conference from Friday until Sunday afternoon. I want to share some experiences from the conference and consider why it is important to attend these educational events.

The conference had an attendance of over 500 individual school board members from 250 different school districts throughout Michigan. The districts ranged from large metropolitan areas, like Dearborn Public schools with a student enrollment greater than 20,000 to smaller rural districts like Tri County. This diversity provided an opportunity to see the vast differences between districts within our own state and the unique challenges we all have to provide an education for our students.

Upon arriving Friday, Lana Ford and I attended the Delegate Assembly. We came together to vote on policies that MASB will uphold for the coming year. A topic brought up to enter into policy was the requirement of education for elected Michigan school board members. The discussion was voted down but it remained a topic for the rest of the conference. This requirement is currently gaining ground in Michigan legislation. It was a topic that was passionately debated throughout the weekend.

On Saturday we opened the weekend with a presentation from Nick Yoder about Creating Systems to Support Social and Emotional learning. A key take away from this was that on average for every $1 invested in social emotional learning there is an $11 savings through costs not spent on later intervention. In the afternoon we got a legislative update, but in between we went to clinic sessions. These were one hour presentations by school district administrators or board members

The speaker on Sunday morning was Grand Rapids Community College president Bill Pink who discussed elevating our Michigan education system. I attended more clinic sessions in-between our last presenter, Josh Schneider. He gave an entertaining presentation about the power of engagement and how to spark our own power for inspiration.

A point of pride for Tri County during the conference was that our own board president, Jill Fennessy, gave closing remarks as president elect of MASB. Next year at the ALC she will be the serving president. Jill represents our school honorably and with poise. This helps put our rural school on a large platform by having representation on the MASB board.

In reflection of the weekend, my profession as a nurse engrains a few things that seamlessly fit the calling of a school board member: continual education and a questioning attitude. To keep up with changes in education and provide the best service to our district an education is needed. Tri County has empowered me to improve my board service through my personal education with classes and conferences. An answer to the question of why it's important to attend these educational conferences is that we want to live by the example we wish to set. If education of our students is important for them to become productive community members, then the continued education of community leaders and representatives should also be a priority.

Jennifer Gould RN
Board Trustee