

## **Interview with Marblehead Schools Superintendent Dr. Gregory Maass** -Dan Rosenberg

Dr. Gregory Maass met with me on the Tuesday when monsoon-like rains flooded Marblehead and causing major flooding and a commuting nightmare. It was Maass' first big weather disaster, and he was happy with how it went. The intensity of the rain had surprised him, and he had only a short timeframe in which to make a decision about delaying the schools' opening. He attempted to make a two-hour delay, but many parents only got the message after dropping their kids off at school. Still, Dr. Maass says he was very impressed and proud of the way the students and faculty handled themselves, they kept their heads and managed to have a normal school day.

Gregory Maass didn't want to be a school superintendent when he was younger; he wanted to be a baseball player and was recruited to play shortstop for the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. When he was cut from his college team, he decided to use some of his leadership talents from on the field, and apply them to getting an education degree. A natural leader, Dr. Maass says "All the things I learned from sports, I applied to being a student." After college, in 1975, he began teaching in a local elementary school. It was there, that he was directed down the career path that he follows even today. The school's principal noticed his strong leadership talents, and suggested that Maass become an administrator. Eventually Dr. Maass became a principal, and in 1994, he finally became a superintendent of schools.

Dr. Maass worked in Green Bay as superintendent for a long time. He was in charge of the district when the Packers won Super Bowl XLV. and says it was amazing to be in Green Bay at the time. In fact, on the day of the Packers' victory parade, Dr. Maass actually had to close schools! The Green Bay Packers' players and staff were well connected to the public schools in

the city, and had made a very large impact on the students. Maass met many team members through coordinating events with public schools.

Over time, he decided he wanted a different, smaller scene to work in. An executive recruiting firm contacted Maass to tell him about the Marblehead opening, and he applied for the job. Dr. Maass says that after visiting Marblehead, talking with the School Committee members, school administrators and townspeople, he was ready to make the move. , Happy with the big switch to the East, he was “looking forward to going to a place that cared about education, and still had its own identity.” He also loves American history, and was very intrigued by the backstory of Marblehead, in the American Revolution.

It hasn't been entirely easy to switch into Marblehead, though. First off, Massachusetts has different laws governing schools than Wisconsin does. Maass has been poring over the books in order to learn all of the laws of his new state. But the most challenging obstacle for Maass? New England traffic. In Wisconsin, Mass says, the traffic and roads all go only in the four cardinal directions. Here, however, the roads go everywhere, and its very easy to become confused and get lost.

Dr. Maass brings a lot to the table in Marblehead. He is a self described “systems guy” and wants to improve Marblehead schools by making more content-based curriculum, improving leadership, and making Marblehead into a problem-solving community, where students can master different subjects on multiple levels, and show their independence. Dr. Maass believes that each individual has a responsibility to work out problems; he doesn't want any more blaming others, rather he believes in a school environment where everyone is honest, and takes responsibility for themselves. He applies this to himself as well, “if you have a concern or

question, some talk to me, don't talk to others, come directly to me." He wants to ensure better communication between parents, students, and staff, and would like every person within the system to know what the outcome of their schooling will be.

Maass has already been making waves in Marblehead High School. He approved an \$88,000 matching grant to install a security system in the school. Maass wants to keep the high school safe and secure, and ensure that no one leaves or enters the school who shouldn't. He says that one can never have enough staff, and the cameras that will be installed will ascertain the security of the school. He guarantees that no cameras will be in classrooms or bathrooms. Maass also wants to monitor the activities outside the school at night. He has done a nighttime walk around, and has noticed lights punched out, and graffiti tagging on the walls. To Dr. Maass, it's not only about security, but also about protecting Marblehead's investment in the building. In his words, "It's about safety, it's about securing the building, and it's about protecting our investment in the school."

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